

HEARTS *VERSUS* HEADS:



A NOVEL.

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HEARTS *VERSUS* HEADS;

OR,

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

A Nobel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

INNES HOOLE, ESQ.

AUTHOR OF

SCENES AT BRIGHTON, SOCIETY AND SOLITUDE, &c.

“ On commence par être dupe,
Et on finit par être fripon.”

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HEARTS *VERSUS* HEADS.

CHAPTER I.

IT is the world that teaches us reservedness and caution. Surrounded by the envious and the malicious, we cannot choose but be the keeper of our own secrets; for are they to our advantage, their disclosure only serves to raise up schemes to circumvent or controvert us, while, if they tell against us, it is making a loophole for the wicked and the worthless to shoot in their arrows; a placing arms in the hands of an enemy, who is only waiting for a breach in our bastion that he may successfully commence the attack against us.

Maria, unconscious that a thought could be misconstrued, or a word perverted, talked on, in familiar security, whenever she met the stranger, disclosing the just sentiments of an upright mind, without pride or ostentation, and betraying, with equal indifference as to the effect, the ignorance naturally arising from the limited nature of her homely education.

The stranger, however, was apparently never tired of listening to her; sometimes he would, with delicacy and gentleness, make use of his superior ability to set her right where she might be wrong, but oftener he would let her retain her untutored ideas, for the very gratification of listening to them; but this, he confessed, was a selfish indulgence, and the next moment he would mingle instruction in his discourse, and, with the learning of the scholar, direct her opinions by his knowledge and wisdom,

dom, while, apparently, only indulging in the amusement of conversation.

Pliant and docile, Maria would readily adopt sentiments that struck home to her comprehension ; unhesitatingly acknowledge her deficiencies, and sweetly laugh at the detection of her follies.

The stranger was sad when she was sad—merry when she was gay ; her sighs were echoed by his sighs, and her smiles never failed to elicit smiles in return.

Mrs. Manners, all this time, was not ignorant that her daughter often met the young apothecary ; but all fears, as to its consequences, seemed drowned in the overpowering one which warned her, as she expressed it, “ to look sharp after her money.” She took in no other impression ; and if Maria casually repeated any of their conversations, it invariably received the same reply of—“ Ah, my dear, he may talk ;

that will not cost money ; but Heaven forbid we should have any thing more to say to him !”

Maria felt the propriety of the wish, and told her mother that she had done every thing to convince him that there was no chance of his ever getting any thing from them ; that it always seemed to amuse him more than it distressed him ; therefore, she now let him do as he liked, without troubling herself about him.

“ Ah, it is all very well to put a good face on the thing,” Mrs. Manners replied ; “ but depend on it, laugh or cry, ill or well, he will never get sixpence of my money.”

Maria fell into the impression her mother had given her, and never saw the stranger in any other light but as the young apothecary. She had become acquainted with him without considering it any epocha in her life ; and as she
had

had never read novels, she would have parted with him without knowing that the circumstance called upon her to break her heart about it. She was unbiassed by sentiments instilled by the perusal of works of imagination. She knew nothing of the despotic principle, that it is essential to fall in love with the first man whom your disengaged heart lights upon; and she never failed to appear before the stranger in all the serenity and self-possession of manner with which she would have encountered either Mr. Selford or Dr. Raby.

This her companion could not fail to discover was different to the reception he had been accustomed to meet in the world, where the dames had thought it essential to exhaust their sweetest smiles upon him; and he one day asked her, after he had been pondering on the little emotion she usually shewed, whether she was glad to see him?

“Oh yes! very glad,” she replied, “for I have got something for you.” She opened a basket she held and shewed him some berries; then resumed—“Doctor Raby tells us to gather these things for him every year, and we found so many, that I have saved these for you, though I do not think mamma was best pleased with my robbing the doctor.”

“And what am I to do with them?” asked the stranger, with a degree of peevishness, and drawing the basket towards him by taking the hand that held it—“swallow them, perhaps, to make me forget your cold-heartedness.”

Maria was the most stupid creature in the world at comprehending the extent of such reproaches, and the stranger could not but smile at the expression of surprise she in her simplicity cast upon him, as looking alternately from him to the basket, she betrayed the loss she was at to trace from whence had sprung his evident disapprobation.

“If

“If you were in the world, Maria,” he said, “I should take you for the veriest little coquette in nature; but, as it is, I can only wonder.” Maria in this did not seem far behind him. “Wonder,” he continued, “what are the concomitant qualities that render a heart competent to feel every other sentiment unequal to the passion of loving.”

These were the words he used, but from the perturbation of his manner, to Maria they were perfectly incomprehensible. She thought, however, the berries had something to do with it, and extricating the basket from his hand, she said—“You need not have them, if you do not like; they can go with the others to doctor Raby; but I must say you are a fine doctor not to know their value!”

If it were possible for the thing to be achieved by a person whom the stranger

still maintained to himself had no pretensions of the sort, Maria, at the moment she spoke, looked perfectly beautiful. There was a playfulness, mingled with reproach, in her manner: she held the basket behind her with one hand, while a graceful action of the other motioned the stranger from her: never, however, had she so completely attracted him; he knew his intemperance was sufficient to have offended, yet he hoped, nay sued to be forgiven.

“First you wont and then you will,” said Maria, in the same manner that she would have corrected Jenny; and believing that the stranger’s anxiety only related to the loss of the basket, which she still held most pertinaciously behind her—“First you wont and then you will! Do you know what they are for?” she inquired; “because, if you do not, I will tell you, and then another time you wont be so foolish as to refuse them.”

“I do

"I do not refuse them, Maria," he said; "you will not understand me." She still looked unconscious. "*N'emporte,*" he added, in a careless tone, "perhaps it is so much the better."

After this interview the stranger absented himself for many days from the vicinity of the parsonage. He was both vexed and surprised at the little control under which he had held his feelings, and he determined to avoid Maria, until he had tutored them back into a little subjection.—"What possesses me?" he would ask himself; "it cannot be that I love her—Nonsense!" was invariably the reply, and for that time the matter ended.

"She is not to be compared to any thing that is only set down as passable in town," he would again burst forth, almost unconsciously to himself shrieking aloud. "Miss Wrexham, by her side, would look like an angel! and

then, as to ignorance! I must beg my horse's pardon, for I was about to compare them."

Thus would he rave. One moment taunting her deficiencies with bitterness—the next giving way to all the softness of his sensibility. The transition from one feeling to the other was rapid and abrupt. Now his voice melted into a tremulous softness—then gave way to all the bitterness of sarcasm. He was firmly fixed, however, in the resolve to let some time elapse before he should again seek to see her, and he endeavoured to employ the hours, that now were somewhat heavy on his hands, in the pursuit of literature. Yet he found, though he might fix his eyes on their pages, his thoughts were still his own, and vain was the endeavour, for many moments together, to seek to divert them. They were ever true to one object; struggling with the chains that
enthralled

enthralled them, yet fast bound, strongly secured, in what appeared to him a mortifying bondage. He would begin the day vigorous in his resolution of not seeing her ; there was spirit in the opposing his inclination ; but when the time was passed, and the dominion gained, he gradually lost his acquired firmness, and he would pass the evening in deploring the folly of thus standing in the way of his own pleasures.

His spirits fell with this self-imposed penance of continued absence, and his health was beginning to be impaired, when he suddenly resolved on leaving the place, and trying the effect of change, and the different concerns that would engross him in London.

This could not be done without, as a tribute of etiquette, having a P. P. C. interview with Maria ; and never had he performed its ceremonials with such delight as beat at his heart on setting out to meet her.

Every angle he turned rendered him breathless with the expectancy that the next step would bring him to her; but the lane, the field, the wood, all were passed, and yet he did not meet her; and he hurried on to the stile of the churchyard, thinking there it would be strange indeed if he did not see her. Here he paused: the solitude of the scene, which was uninterrupted save by himself, added a gloom to the already-disappointed state of his spirits. Maria was not there, and the only vestige that remained that she had ever been, was the mark of both Pincher's foot and her own, stamped in autumnal dirt upon the summit of the white railing.

The stranger was subdued as he gazed upon it. He thought how soon he should leave all that, for the moment, seemed worth attaching him to earth—leave a creature to wear out her hours in solitude, who, with a little more instruction,

struction, he could not but admit, that would add so much to society. But where was she? and he darted over the stile, turned the angle of the church, and, screened by a large yew tree, with impatient gaze surveyed the parsonage.

How different the scene it presented to the tumult warring within his own breast! all there seemed peace and tranquillity; yet not the satisfaction of possessing all the world has to bestow, but the consolation of knowing with how little it is possible to attain it.

The tenement before him, standing in its little garden, rather laying under the road that separated it from the churchyard, bore evident testimony in its outward appearance of having been for many years the residence of those who possessed but a life-interest in it; and that interest not such as a careless Christian would take, who in mundane enjoyments loses sight of the fragile tenure
by

by which we hold our mortality, but such as a minister of the gospel had gradually deteriorated, by the warning doctrines by which he weekly sobered down his parishioners.

Every thing proclaimed indeed, as far as bricks, mortar, and thatch could speak, that the last incumbent had not forgotten the text, that in the midst of life he was in death. To keep the cottage *air-tight* had been the only object in view, as the botching here and there on the outside, to the detriment of the part ornamental, plainly discovered.

The busy hand of nature, however, was doing what it could to repair the failure of art; and though rudely torn down by the labourer, to make way for his exertions, yet the ivy was seen again creeping over the new mortar, and doing what it could to conceal all imperfections.

There was, however, a harmony in
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the mixture of the grey stone and the green leaves that clung to it, that rendered the house picturesque, in spite of the marring hands of jobbing bricklayers and plasterers, while the motley roof, partly thatch and moss-covered slate, although it added not to its character, either for consistency or comfort, yet, by its irregularity, rendered it no bad subject for the pencil of an artist.

The stranger took all this in with a glance, for his perception was chiefly directed in piercing the casement window, of what he considered probable to be the sitting-room of the inhabitants. Nothing, however, met his gaze, and his heart sickened with vague fears and bitter disappointment. He had arranged his departure for the morrow, yet how could he leave Kingslade without one word, one look, one tender adieu, that might lead him to believe that when absent he should not be forgotten!

—“ And

—"And what matters it?" he asked, for a moment recovering himself; "the chances are against us ever again meeting. If I come, she must be gone." He glanced at the house as he spoke, then added, hastily, "Not yet, not yet; rest there contented, dear girl, while, for thy sake, I will make the best of the worst that can befall me."

As he said this, he again looked towards the house, and there was in the raised brow, the compressed lips, the involuntary uplifting of the shoulder, a faithful disclosure of the depreciating sentiments called into action as he examined the ruined little mansion.— "What a casket," he reproachfully exclaimed, "to contain such a treasure! It is the diamond in her native mine!" He smiled at his own thoughts. "A rough diamond! pshaw!" He was ashamed of his own illiberality. "And of what use," he asked, "are the world's
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shewy accomplishments? do they add one virtue to the vain beings who possess them? do they preserve them from one folly, or deter them from the pursuit of one vicious inclination? Do they secure to their possessor either friendship in private life, or add one rivet to esteem when exhibited before an envious—a heartless public?”

The stranger's anxiety to again see Maria became, if possible, stronger as he made these reflections.—“ Sweet innocent!” he fondly ejaculated, pressing his hand over his eyes, that he might indulge, without interruption, the image he had recalled there—“ what more is to be desired than the gifts with which Nature has endowed you?—a power of giving beauty to plainness, dignity to innocence, and propriety to the most careless demeanour. Serenity is in your frown—enchantment in your smile; without wit you please, without guile
you

you enchant, and without beauty you steal upon the affections, and take the proud heart captive, without its daring to indulge one hope of ever recovering its freedom."

A light hand rested on his arm. The stranger started, opened his eyes, and the object of his ruminations stood before him. Her face was pale, and there was, if possible, more negligence in her whole appearance than he had ever before witnessed; and the idea immediately came across him, that perhaps she had mourned his absence. Oh, the insatiate heart of man! rejecting devotion secured unsought, yet hailing it in every trivial act where it is withheld from him.

One word both destroyed the gratifying illusion the stranger had formed for the moment, and explained away the intoxicating tenderness of her manner. She had taken his hand within one of
her

her own, while the other still rested on his arm; and he felt that, though for a moment she was unable to speak, yet with her gentle force she was endeavouring to impel him towards the parsonage.

“What would you have, Maria?” he asked, gently straining her towards him; “would you make me a prisoner, that another time I may not avoid you?”

Maria put up the hand she held to her eyes, and the stranger felt a tear-drop fall upon it; and again he was about to speak, when she interrupted him, by saying—“Do not talk—do not make a noise—but come in with me. My mother is very ill. Doctor Raby has just left us; therefore come in, and see if you can do any thing of service during his absence.”

She still urged him on, in spite of the assurances that he could be of no assistance; and they had reached the church-yard

yard gate before the stranger manifested distinctly that he should go no farther.

"Why do you hesitate?" asked Maria; "I have sat at the window, and have watched for you for many days, and thrice I ran into the wood for you; and now you are come, you refuse to do what you can for my poor mother."

There was a reproachful expression on her countenance, which disappeared, however, as she said—"Perhaps you think"—she hesitated, and with innate delicacy considered what term she should use to make herself understood without wounding the stranger's feelings, should she have misunderstood them; "perhaps you think," she again repeated, and again, "perhaps you think, if you should do any thing for mamma, that she has neither the will nor the power to repay you; but I promise——"

The stranger interrupted her.—"Maria," he said, "I will no longer impose upon you. I am unqualified for the
office

office you assign me. I can do no good to your mother, that is, regarding her health; but is there any thing—any little comfort she wants—any task a friend could perform, that by relieving her mind would impart its proportion of benefit to her body?”

Maria looked sorrowfully, yet kindly at him.—“Poor fellow!” she said, “then doctor Raby was right, and you are not clever.” She gave the hand she held a friendly shake, as she continued—“Never mind—never mind.”

What a creature was this to sooth the heart of man—to enliven him in moments of mirth, and to sympathize with him in the hour of affliction! Never had her eyes looked so beautiful as while beaming compassion and consolation on the stranger. He was lost in the fond gaze, till recalled to himself by her telling him she had already been too long absent from her mother, and prepared

pared to quit him. It was the last moment they might ever spend together, yet he knew not how to prolong it—how to rob it of its intense bitterness.

There was much unkindness, he began to fancy, in leaving her; unkindness in deserting her, when she appeared so much to need a friend. He could not do it, and asking her to let him see her again at that time to-morrow, he resolved on, at least for one day, delaying his departure.

Although the first at the appointed spot, Maria was not long in joining him, and she came brilliant in smiles, for her mother was a great deal better.

“And did you ask her if there was any thing a friend could do for her?”

Maria had not forgotten, but there was nothing. “She said,” she continued, “she only wished I was as well provided for as my sister, and then she should die at any time contented:” but she

she will not die now," Maria said; "she will soon be quite well, and then we shall have nothing to plague us but that, Valentine's coming to take possession of the dear parsonage."

"And when do you expect him?"

Maria replied, that it was quite uncertain; that, though ready for it, she believed that he was not yet made a parson; and that until then Mr. Selford would continue to do the duty, and they should remain at the parsonage.

"And shall you be sorry to quit it?" asked the stranger, half doubting if such a thing were possible, as he again examined its unprepossessing appearance.

"Very!" Maria replied; and there was a conciseness in the manner, a depth in the tone that uttered it, that carried conviction to the stranger.

"And what does your mother say to it?" he asked.

"She does not say much," replied Maria;
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ria; "only that we cannot expect to continue in it for ever; and then she cries bitterly."

"Tell her," said the stranger, "that she shall never quit it;" and seeing Maria stare with wonder at his energetic manner, he added—"Tell her—ay, from the poor apothecary, tell her, that Valentine Ladbroke will never turn adrift the poor orphan, or the desolate widow."

"I will tell her, certainly," returned Maria, and there was a peculiar accent on the last word, that expressed it would be easier to repeat it than to get it credited.

The stranger for a moment seemed to consider intently; to vacillate between two alternatives; first resolving on one, then rejecting it, and returning to the other. At length he said, clearing up his brow and putting aside every thought that militated against his present enjoyment—

ment—"Maria, it is folly to waste the few moments left me in useless words, and irrelevant disclosures. Let it suffice, that neither you nor your mother's interests will ever be forgotten by me: and you, Maria," he added, after a pause, "tell me truly, will you ever remember there is another doctor in the world, beside your old friend doctor Raby?"

"I never shall forget you," replied Maria, with all the energy of her feeling; "you might just as well suppose I should forget my sister Rosy."

This was not what the stranger wanted; in thus being classed with her sister, he fancied he was not of that consequence to her heart that he desired. He wished to stand alone in her affections; one word even should not be able to express that which she felt for him, and for another. He must have something exclusive—her whole soul must be his, or he should look with discontent on the insufficiency of his dominion.

True love, however, is allowed by every author who knows any thing about it, to be diffident; and though the stranger seemed to look to Maria for his whole portion of happiness, yet he forbore to explain to her how much she had to do with it. To give her up now, was to give her up for ever; yet in a voice, the nearest to indifference he could assume, he told her he left Kingslade on the morrow. She heard it in silence—there was no affectation of sorrow, while the regret she really felt was indulged without any attempt at concealment. Every thing she did, in fact, was so different to what it would have been done in the world, that the stranger was never weary of watching the nature of her proceedings. The big tear now stood in her eye; yet there was something wanting to satisfy him. She took his hand, and shook it kindly; yet there was still something wanting. None of her actions indeed could ever be misunderstood; and no
love,

love, that is, no devoted affection, could be traced in them. Nothing was to be detected, but the good will one human being bears towards another.

The stranger tried to assure himself he was satisfied—a satisfaction established on the simple query, of what use would be to him the discovery of any other sentiments? So strangely do we deceive ourselves, denying the existence of a passion engrafted in the very heart's core.

It was getting late, yet the stranger still lingered, still hoped that he should discover that he was not quite so indifferent to Maria as her manners testified. A little might decide it for him, or against him. He knew her replies were the spontaneous dictates of her real sentiments, and a trifle therefore would remove him from the irresolution of doubt, into the more bearable state of certainty. It was an odd criterion he chose to go

by; he asked her—"Which would cost her most grief, to part with himself or Jenny?"

Anxiously he watched her countenance, for he knew there he should read his judgment. He saw her deeply considering upon it, and in the intenseness of her premeditated decision, she twice repeated his demand—"Which would I rather part with, you or Jenny?" as though putting to herself the question.

"It is enough, Miss Manners," he said, testily interrupting her; "there is nothing to detain me. God bless you!" he twice fervently repeated, then bowing, with the graceful formality he would use in a drawing-room, turned away—and left her.

CHAPTER II.
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THERE was not much intercourse kept up between the sisters; their letters were like angels' visits — “few and far between;” and there was a constraint even in those that did pass, arising from the desire Maria had to conceal her mother's indisposition, and Rosalie's being forced to weigh every sentence, lest she should betray the uncomfortableness of her situation to those who too dearly loved her to read it with indifference.

Rosalie's circumstances had suffered no amelioration; her aunt never studied her comfort when absent, and when together, her discourse generally flowed in acrimonious reflections upon her niece's want of polish, and exaggerated accounts

of the tax it was to have the charge of a "horrid poor relation."

Rosalie received all this with what might have been taken for the calm feeling of a philosopher. There was no expression in her countenance of either mortification or displeasure; and though for a moment the dulness of the eye might be lighted up with a vivid flash, it was averted till she could steady it down into its usual expression of gloom and apathy.

Although lady Delaware was usually engaged every day in the round of pleasure she had marked out for herself, yet, as the London season had not yet commenced, she still found time to attend to the store-room herself, and to trespass most severely on the temper of Rosalie. It was only when strangers were present that her niece escaped from the splenetic animadversions her dislike to her occasioned; and as these so frequently dropped in to the family dinner, that "mak-  
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ing of the stranger, no stranger at all," they soon became no obstacle to the indulgence of her ladyship's lavishly bestowed censure.

Colonel Clayton's presence alone secured to her a partial cessation from oppression, and she learned, from the relief it gave her, to hail his approach with pleasure. Before him, lady Delaware's remarks never exceeded sprightly witticisms and arch sallies, each rather tending to set herself off, than to confound and perplex poor Rosalie.

Her niece, thus left at peace, had opportunity to make her observations, and to trace to its source the variation the colonel never failed to effect in the temperament and manners of her ladyship. She would have read novels to little purpose, if she had not immediately given Cupid the credit for this vast change. Her aunt, it was plain, was in love with the gentleman ; but whether he could



feel the passion towards any object who had exceeded the age of eighteen, she was puzzled to determine. Her studies had thrown no light upon the subject—no loveable damsel there, had even so much as touched upon the twenties: while her aunt!—why she was old enough to be his grandmother!

Thus did youth argue the point; but though giving it up as impossible in theory, yet in practice her penetration was not long in confessing the colonel to be not proof against the advances of her ladyship. It then became her study to discover what were the attractions possessed by the colonel; but how far short did he fall of the Doricourts and Delvilles she had been introduced to by her dip into polite literature! Where was their flowery eloquence—their tender devotion? When, she asked herself, had she ever discovered him on his knees before the object of his passion?  
never!

never! Therefore until that delicate dilemma should take place, he must allow her to remain a little sceptical as to the truth of his attentions.

Frequent observations, however, could not fail in doing away by degrees this false criterion; and Rosalie in time was forced to believe, that the colonel would have no possible objection in taking advantage of her ladyship's predilection.

This proved by observation, rather than mathematical demonstration, the question was, since there were no cruel fathers or despotic guardians in the case, why procrastinate the marriage? But Rosalie knew not the *pros* and *cons* a woman of a certain age will listen to, before she consents to do a foolish thing, or give the world reason to believe that she has allowed passion to hoodwink the powers of reason. It is true that inclination will, with surprising ingenuity, undermine the persuasions of prudence; but at the same time the imperceptible

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influence

influence of the world, and the dread of its opinion, acts in its turn as security against too readily giving way to the indulgence of inclination.

Lady Delaware knew the full value of herself: she was a handsome widow, with a rich jointure; and though she was constrained to confess there was something irresistible in the colonel — his youth, his good looks, or perhaps his attentions, yet she determined to *look at him twice* before she consented to refresh the withered wreath of connubial felicity by admitting him into her establishment. With this, she was desirous of seeing him at her table as often as possible; and though she fancied it was to indulge only in a little *espionnage* very allowable on the occasion, yet she was so taken up with her own *minauderies*, that the colonel promised to pass muster at the cheap rate of a few well-directed assiduities.

He had the good fortune (and it was the

the only *fortune* he possessed) to have a graceful figure and interesting countenance; dressed in the extremity of the fashion; and was altogether no despicable addition to the train of a fine lady. His address was prepossessing; and though he seldom joined in general conversation, excepting by a monosyllable or acquiescing bow, yet it was always well thrown in, and gracefully given in any demur, as a casting vote for those with whom he wished to secure favour. But while he spoke little himself, he was all attention when any lady spoke to him; and having his eyes generally cast downwards, he had a mode of raising them slowly to the face of the fair speaker, and fixing them with a look of tender interest there, which was in no common degree infatuating. Yet, while he pleased all, no one could accuse him of ever having undergone the fatigue of uttering a *bon mot*, or a witticism. But the

witty admired him, and the self-sufficient sought him, without thinking it either a waste of time, or a thing detrimental to their character of being ardent lovers of *esprit*, &c. &c.

It was an art he possessed of gaining credit with little trouble for any thing he chose to lay claim to; nobody knew the depth of his learning, or the legitimate right he had in any degree to dictate the fashions. He was only colonel Clayton; no fortune, no family; yet he was received every where. In the societies of literature he was the scholar; and in the circles of politeness the *vrai Amphytrion* of fashion.

All this was established by the bow and the smile; but it was a bow, that instead of asserting his own superiority, rather delicately implied a submission to the wisdom of others, while artfully administering to their vanity; and his smile was a well tried-passport, that never failed

failed to secure him every success, in a world where little is to be gained without *love* or *money*. The former he could counterfeit without outraging the laws of the land, and it answered his purpose nearly as well as possessing the latter: he never dined at his own expence; but without the danger of being cited as an impostor at the court of Cupid, generally partook of the good things of this life at the houses of those dames whom he considered owed him some return, for the celebrity he had bestowed on them by a public display of his attention. With no other property than his half-pay, he readily consented to be supported by voluntary contributions, omitted no one sacrifice to secure favour, and, by the general concurrence of his circle, became an universal favourite.

Lady Delaware soon found that she was not singular in her partiality for the colonel. With the penetration natural  
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to women, she discovered that both maids, wives, and widows, had entered the lists against her; and that instead of her considering she was doing the colonel a favour in admitting him to her table, she must look upon it as a glory gained over the interests of her rivals. Nothing so quickens the endeavours of the softer sex, as a little opposition; under this excitation they will not scruple to contend with a superior power, and to endeavour to gain by cunning that preference they might fear to lose by appraisement.

Lady Delaware exerted herself to the utmost to appropriate the colonel; paid him marked attention at her table; while the display of plate on the sideboard was to bribe to her interest any idle thought he might entertain concerning the disparity of their ages. But while thus perverting the colonel's scruples, she had not yet so far smothered her  
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own, as to be quite sure that if he did offer himself, she should ever be induced to accept him.—“It is sacrificing too much,” she would say, “to an idle fancy.” But this was in her hours of reflection and solitude; she would see him at night, and while appropriating his arm to herself, to the mortification and envy of many a female observer, she would declare that, *coute qui coute*, no one should ever possess the right of taking it from her.

It was, while thus linked together, that she discovered how generally seducing were his attractions; she saw the blush of pleasure mount the cheek of her who for a moment received his attentions—saw through the motive that induced many a fan to be let drop near him, that he might gratify the owner by the soft manner of his taking it up, and again presenting it to her. But for the witnessing the eclat of her having secur-  
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ed him, lady Delaware would have wished all these sensitive ladies further. She could not give up without a murmur one atom of his attentions; but how to confine them she knew not. It is true, she piloted him out of the precincts of youth and beauty collected in the dance, to the card-rooms, where she supposed nothing but the odd trick would be attended to, and the enumeration of honours; but she was deceived—there was no *trick* came up to the one of inveigling him — no honours equalled a smile from him; and many an old man had to grumble over the loss of the game, who chanced to have a female for his partner.

Sometimes she was weak enough to think, that by marrying him she should concentrate in herself all his desire for pleasing; but it was an unfashionable supposition, and one that daily experience shewed her the fallacy of. Marriage

riage indeed seemed a licence to allow the parties to follow their own inclinations; and, whatever her vanity, she could not flatter herself that the colonel's would lead him to be tacked for ever to her apron string. It was these reflections that induced her to pause over the important step before she ventured upon it, and to ponder ere she formed an engagement from which there was no retracting. *Vestigia nulla retrorsam.*

Hesitation however is a sign of weakness, and the colonel bid fair to carry his point, in spite of this glimmering of worldly wisdom testified by her ladyship. Women indeed seldom win the battle when their inclinations are at war with their interests; and though lady Delaware prayed with unwonted fervour that she might be enabled to act up to her own advantages, yet this said article kicked the beam when put in the scale of competition with the colonel.

Time

Time however was to arrange matters for her; the colonel had not yet made the offer; and though her vanity whispered that it only waited till a proper opportunity, yet till this event had actually taken place, she might surely amuse herself without the trouble of taking a peep into futurity.

Under this clause, the colonel was permitted to bestow upon her as much as he pleased of his attentions; to attend her of an evening, to lounge at her house of a morning, and to occupy a seat at her family table, whenever his numerous engagements rendered this *supreme happiness*, as he chose to call it, possible.

At these times nothing amused Rosalie more than her aunt's complete change of character—a change so vast, that but for the clue her amatory studies had given her, she must have lost all entertainment in the wonder it would have occasioned her. She could hardly believe

lieve that one who had been the torment of the house all the morning, could so far translate herself as to become the darling of the dinner-table—a sunbeam that shed its glory on all around; overflowing with kind feelings, and attuning that voice to a touching softness, which, at times, had the power of electrifying her domestics, and her dependent relative.

## CHAPTER III.



"God forgive me!" exclaimed old lady Calmadoe, who, with her husband and the colonel, were taking an early dinner at lady Delaware's, that they might attend the theatre to witness the performance of a celebrated actress—"God forgive me! but I never told William we should again want the carriage."

"And why should you?" asked her kind-hearted hostess; "if you count heads, I think my carriage will contain us."

The old lady did as she was desired—"One, two, three, four. Ay, well! your ladyship is very good—no doubt we can pack four. But, colonel, what are you thinking of, to desert us?"

The

The colonel bowed and smiled, and the bow and the smile expressed, that nothing was farther from his intentions.

The lady looked puzzled, and again she set about reckoning—"One, two, three, four—five! Ay, well! I dare say Miss Manners will have no objection to ride bodkin! We must not mind a little crowding. I am sure I remember the time when I have walked many a mile, when I was a young thing at home, to see a play at the end of it. Miss Manners will not mind, I dare to say."

At the mention of her name included among those who were preparing for the amusements of the evening, Rosalie started, her cheeks flushed rosy red with pleasurable emotion, then turning again pale with the anxiety she was under to know what was to be the result; and to anticipate it, she narrowly watched the expression of her aunt's countenance.

Rosalie Manners knew that face too well,

well, not immediately to detect the passing frown, that boded her no good ; and she was partly prepared for the denial, when her aunt, turning towards lady Calmadoe, replied — “ Thank you, you are very kind ; but we will not inconvenience you : Miss Manners has no wish, no intention of going out this evening.” And at once to satisfy the old lady’s doubt, she added — “ You see it is out of the question—she is not at all prepared for it.”

Rosalie, though she fancied herself reconciled to her fate, had not breathed during this plausible harangue ; but at the conclusion she lost herself—gave a gulp to relieve her emotion, and said, in a hurried tone, that could scarcely be understood through her agitation — “ Oh ma’am ! I could get ready in a moment ; I could put on my five-tucked frock, and my black silk spencer, and my jean shoes—I could indeed ! I could get ready in an instant !”

Implor-

Imploringly she looked towards her aunt ; the smile she met misled her—she knew not that more eyes than her own rested on her ladyship, and that policy forbade her giving way to any less amiable expression, but taking it for an assent, she hastily rose from table, and was moving towards the door, when her aunt said—“ Stay, Rosalie.”

Nothing could be softer than the tone ; but a look accompanied it, that immediately placed Rosalie in her chair again. Rosalie however had interested the feelings of the kind old lady Calmadoe, and her cause was not so readily lost sight of. She still conceived there could be no possible objection to the young lady's going, but the fear that she herself might be incommoded ; and again she set about assuring lady Delaware that it was the last thing in the world she minded—“ It is not like, you know,” she continued, “ as though we were off for a long journey. It is but in the carriage and  
out



out again. I remember well the time when I would have sat upon my thumb to have seen either a play or a pantomime."

Lady Delaware bowed in acknowledgment, but it was far from implying any assent to Rosalie's taking advantage of her ladyship's kind offer.

The niece was passive—the aunt polite; and the subject seemed about to be forgotten, when colonel Clayton unexpectedly interceded for her. Few words were uttered; but he bowed and he smiled, and his suit, let it be what it would, could not fail to be granted. It was fortunate for Rosalie, and she could scarcely believe herself awake, and that all was real, when she found herself, and her five-tucked frock, seated in the carriage.

Rosalie knew not the precise description of entertainment she was going to; but that mattered little; she was about  
to

to be entertained, and it produced a tumult of joy at her heart, more difficult to be controlled than all the griefs that had ever dwelt there. It danced in her eyes, it sparkled on her cheek, it electrified her whole frame. She was about perhaps to enter upon the ground that had produced Clementina *all* her adorers — “*All!*” sighed Rosalie, “when one would do for me; so that he would take me out of aunt Delaware’s control, and the odious back parlour.”

By this time they had reached the theatre; the carriage stopped; and after walking through long stone passages, mounting narrow stairs, and descending others equally narrow, they were shewn into the private box that had been secured for them. The first act was just over, and the musicians in the orchestra, and the gods in the gallery, were vying with each other who should make the most noise. Rosalie was thunderstruck!

it seemed more like a dream than ever; and, more frightened than amused, she timidly sat down in the chair that was placed for her. Recovering herself a little, her eyes glanced over the pit, and round the boxes. She expected to be an object of curiosity to every one; and was somewhat relieved from the embarrassment that was creeping over her, on finding, however worthy the notice of the public, they were too much engaged to regard her. At any other time, this would have occasioned fresh wounds to her vanity; but all feeling was, for the present, condensed into curiosity. The scene drew up, and Rosalie gave to the stage her whole attention.

The play was "The Stranger," the characters filled by the very best performers; and before many scenes, Mrs. Haller herself could not have suffered, or have wept more bitterly, than did poor Rosalie Manners. With eyes rivetted to the perform-

performance, she thought not of the tears that coursed each other down her cheeks, nor of suppressing the sobs that accompanied them. In vain did lady Delaware whisper in her ear, that she was making herself very ridiculous. In vain did the kind-hearted lady Calmadoe endeavour to enforce upon her comprehension that all she saw was "only fun, and make-believe." Rosalie's tears, like the waves at king Canute's feet, stopped for no one.

"There is Ruth Pleydell in the box but one from the stage," observed lady Delaware, addressing the colonel. "Now, do turn your eyes the right way," she continued; "*I* am not Ruth Pleydell. There she sits—just opposite—bent upon destruction, no doubt! Lord Kelson, as usual, in the capacity of *cavalière servante*. Oh, how well she knows the tactics of war! nobody will wonder if he is jilted—poor man!"

"He should know better," replied the colonel, "than to trust the deceitful smile, called up merely to entangle the heedless heart, which when won, will be slighted, mortified, put upon the shelf, and finally pronounced not worth the winning."

The colonel had not been so eloquent for a long time; lady Delaware did not reply to him, but observed—"She looks hideous to-night," regarding her through her glass; "a perfect fright!—that odious black hat!—what is she going to do? She moves—does she bow to me? Yes, she nods; we shall have her here in a moment."

"Lady Delaware was right; the box door opened, and Ruth Pleydell, leaning on lord Kelson's arm, made her appearance. Lady Delaware rose to receive her; pressed her hand with the warmth of *immense friendship*; declared it was an age since they had met; complimented

mented her on her good looks—prophe-  
sied the *chaperon noir* would cut out  
the *chaperon rouge* (which was the after-  
piece)—ah, ah, ah! and with this witty  
remark disturbed the colonel to place  
Ruth close beside her.

No one yet has been able to describe  
the precise thing that charms in a fa-  
shionable woman; that nameless some-  
thing, that enables her smile to give wit  
to dulness, and grace to deformity;  
that excites universal homage, and  
stamps with free currency every thing  
she condescends to set her seal to.

Ruth Pleydell possessed this fascina-  
tion. All the grandeur and elegance of  
fashion seemed concentrated in her, and  
she became the centre of the circle in  
which she moved. All confessed her  
power—many envied her—many imitat-  
ed her—but none had power to eclipse  
the star that shone in spite of all with  
unchanged brightness. There was how-

ever a hope held out to those who looked with an evil eye on the sunshine of her prosperity, that this *good luck*, as they chose to call it, could not last for ever. Ruth Pleydell was fast approaching what has been termed "the centre arch of the bridge;" and though they were aware her large fortune would, at any time, secure her a husband, yet they anticipated the hand of time, on that *dial* the face, could not fail to scare away, and secure to their more juvenile charms, many of her present admirers.

To look on Ruth Pleydell, however, and think of age, at present was impossible. It is true she had entered upon her eight-and-twentieth year; but the *enjoyment* of youth still laughed with in her eye; its softness yet added beauties to her cheek, while it seemed that the rapidity of time lent her but stronger arguments to enforce the full enjoyment of pleasure.

No

No one yet had possessed the power to touch her heart. She flirted with all with capricious levity ; would listen to flattery, rather than to truth ; and made no scruple of declaring, that she preferred foolishness to wisdom — wounding by the powers of her wit those affections she might have valued, and valuing only the attentions of those whose affections were not worth the having. Thus did she continue to gratify the senses, at the expence of her judgment; and while neglecting real for imaginary happiness, was spending her youth among a heartless throng, who knew not the ties of affection ; never failing at the same time to thank the stars for giving her a heart, as yet, proof to the powers of Cupid. “ Oh ! the little susceptible ! ” she exclaimed, looking with astonishment at Rosalie, who, towards the last scene, had become, if possible, more agitated than ever. “ Weeping ! ” looking at the



same time with playful curiosity into her face—"Yes! positively weeping!—and at what? at the amiable defects of one, whose party-coloured virtues, were they in real life, unglossed by scenery, dresses, or decorations, your feelings would revolt from."

Rosalie heard her not. What Mrs. Haller lost in esteem, she had gained in interest; and Ruth Pleydell without opposition might have proved her an angel by argument, or by demonstration a demon, and Rosalie would have known very little about the matter.

It was the last scene: the Stranger and Mrs. Haller were on the stage together, therefore it is not to be wondered at, that Rosalie could spare no one iota of her attention—"Had I *three* ears," she might have said, "I'd hear thee;" but, knowing little of Skakespeare, she uttered not a word; but moving her chair round, endeavoured to  
avoid

avoid without rudeness Miss Pleydell's observation.

Attention however had become the property of all. Even Ruth, who scoffed at sympathy, was lured to silence by the excellence of the acting before them.

The trying moment was approaching; the hapless beings were about to take their last farewell—their hands lie in each other—their eyes mournfully meet—they stammer another “farewell!” and part. At that moment the children spring towards them—“Dear father! dear mother!” They press the children with speechless affection; then tear themselves away—gaze at each other—spread their arms, and rush into an embrace. The children run and cling round their parents, and the curtain falls.

Rosalie was not prepared for this abrupt finale, so peculiar to the German drama; she sprang from the chair, uplifted her hands as though she would

prevent its descent; then, turning to Miss Pleydell, she asked—"Is it right?—should it come down?—shall not we see any more?"

Ruth Pleydell shook her head, and replied in the negative. Rosalie seemed to reflect a moment, and it all came back to her memory. The uncertainty was cruel in which they had left her; and weeping bitterly, she asked, between sobs—"D--o y-o-u thin-k he'---ll for---give her?"

Every one in the box laughed but Rosalie; she had again looked towards the curtain, and by the intenseness of her gaze seemed endeavouring to pierce beyond—to still hope that it would again draw up and shew that they were happy. But word was brought that the carriage waited; and taking leave of Miss Pleydell, who returned to her friends, the party rose and quitted the theatre.

## CHAPTER IV.



ROSALIE's sobs and tears were not stilled when set down in Halrey-street; lady Delaware proceeded to an assembly, and more miserable than ever she had been in her life, Rosalie re-entered her aunt's drawing-room. Drawing a chair close to the fire, her head resting on her hands, her elbows on her knees, she attempted to review the events of the evening, and to wonder over and over again whether poor Mrs. Haller was yet forgiven. Never had she witnessed such heart-rending situations! and misled by the justness and accuracy of the conception evinced by the performers, such intimate knowledge of the human heart, that she could not separate it in her

mind from reality — the bosom labouring with unutterable wo—the agonized tear—the rapture in which they looked upon the children—the bitter smile, could not be artificial! they *must* have felt it all! and again she melted into the extreme of grief herself at the very recollection.

Some time passed in this manner, alleviated only by the assurance, that nothing should ever again tempt her to visit the theatre. Unfamiliarized with objects of compassion, her sympathy with fictitious distress had far exceeded the “luxury of wo;” it had been with her no passive sensation; but gave birth to an active desire to do what she could towards relieving those who appeared under such intense mental suffering: and with difficulty she had restrained herself from aiding Mrs. Haller’s cause by words, and pleading for her.—“Feel for a mother’s heart!” she had said; and Rosalie  
would

would have added—"Yes; sir, do pray—do, feel for a mother!" But her voice failed her; it was lost in the sobs that hysterically burst from her; and—"They will never catch me at the play again!" she repeated to herself, as the only solace she could find to alleviate the saddening recollection.

Thus pondering it over and over again, forgetting the lateness of the hour, she still rested in the drawing-room, her elbows on her knees, her hands clasped together, her pale cheek resting on them, her eyes fixed upon the fire; yet she seemed neither to hear or see any thing, but totally absorbed in her own reflections, was lost to all around her.

A loud knock at the door however soon put to flight her ruminations. It was her aunt come home, she thought; and knowing the chances were against her being pleased at finding her still up, she hastily tried to light her chamber-candle,

candle, hoping yet to succeed in escaping her; but, under these circumstances of haste, every thing becomes provokingly obstinate. The wick of the candle, in spite of her best endeavours, chose to remain inignitable. She heard the carriage steps let down: still it would not light. Nothing was now to be done, but to make the best of it. The door opened; and, instead of her aunt, a young man stood before her. He appeared equally astonished with herself, and as an apology for the abruptness of his *entrée*, explained that he had hoped to surprise his mother.

Rosalie looked at him from head to foot; stared in his face, as though it was only a picture; and then, with uncontrolled astonishment, exclaimed—"My gracious! you don't mean to say you are cousin John then?"

He explained, that he certainly was unaware of any relationship existing between

tween them, bowing with an air of forced gallantry—he was sir John Delaware. This was uttered in a manner that, had it been written, must have had a note of admiration after it. There was pride in its tone; and seemed brought forward to convince her that she certainly was mistaken.

There was nothing indeed, either in her face or appearance, to render him at all anxious to establish their consanguinity; and on her explaining that she *really* was his cousin, he muttered—“The devil!” and turned to give some directions to his servant.

Rosalie had now the opportunity of observing him; and the investigation made her almost hesitate in concluding him to be the person he proclaimed himself. She had never thought of him but as a boy. She had heard he was at college; and *college* and *school* were with her synonymous. Had she not known  
that



that he was near her own age, she would, from his appearance, have pronounced him at least five-and-twenty. A four-in-hand box-coat with capes and collar, indeed, added no little to the respectability of his size; while the shawl tied over his chin, and the whip he still held in his hand, gave her altogether more the idea that he was a nondescript vulgarian, than that he was either "cousin John," or a gentleman.

"Well, what is the news?" he asked, turning to her, after having given directions to his servant concerning his trunks, dressing-case, and writing-desk. "What's the best news in London? didn't expect me, eh? look quite dumb-founded! moon-struck! blue-deviled! what is the matter?"

"Nothing," replied Rosalie, somewhat sulkily.

"And where is the old lady?" he asked. Rosalie thought it lucky his mother

ther

ther did not hear him—"Gone to a rout, I suppose?" he continued, "or some such stuff. But did not she tell you I was coming?" Rosalie replied in the negative—"That is strange!" he again proceeded; "my signal could not have missed fire? She must have received my letter?" Rosalie knew nothing about it. "Why, I write to tell her I should take wing either to-day or to-morrow—have an engagement for to-morrow, therefore I started to-day, and tooled them up presently! I am no slouch upon the road, I can tell you! Beat all your bloods, bang-ups, swells, blowings, and topping-ones, out and out!" Here he laughed heartily at some recollection, and whistled through his teeth as though the *prads* were still before him. "Hell-fire fun upon the road!" This was said in a manner to account for his risibility, and again he laughed immoderately.

Rosalie had long lost all respect for  
him.

him. If the colonel had fallen short in her idea of what a "lord of the creation" ought to be, great was the fall thereof, in regard to her cousin. He was not of the same race as any one of her heroes; he was not worthy even to be Dori-court's groom or Delville's coachman—so rough! so boisterous! so vulgar!

"Ring the bell, will you, Mademoiselle?" he asked, seeing Rosalie standing near it. The servant entered—"Send up my rascal!" then turning to Rosalie, he said—"Now, if you are a judge of the sort of thing, I *will* shew you a treasure. What a snail the fellow is!" he impatiently observed, "could not come slower if his legs were in the stocks. Oh, damn you!" he said, as the servant shewed his face; "one step to-day, and one to-morrow! vanish, and fetch me up my case of crops."

"Crop!" repeated Rosalie, to herself, "crop!" but the word gave her no sort  
of

of clue to the sight she was about to be indulged with.

Her cousin had thrown himself, booted as he was, full length upon the sofa—  
“I’ll bet you twenty to one,” he said, ceasing suddenly from exerting his voice in imitation of a mail-horn; “I’ll bet you twenty to one, you never saw such a sight as I am going to shew you! the greatest oddity I ever met with! ‘eccentric,’ as honest Jack would say—fit to put in a *peep-slang*.”

The baronet was just beginning to wonder, in no very gentle manner, what detained “the brute,” when the servant entered with a long deal case, which, by its appearance, still more puzzled Rosalie to know what could possibly be within side it.

The baronet rose from the sofa, and with many oaths, accompanied with a continual singing sort of a whistle, by the assistance of his servant succeeded at  
length

length in raising the cover of the case that contained his treasure—"This *will* be your tool for carrying on the war!" he exclaimed, as taking a long stick from the box, he placed it, with much complacency, before his cousin. "What do you say to that?" he asked, after having turned on his heel, to give her time to examine it. "Is not that prime? bang up with a vengeance! what do you say to that, Miss What's-your-name?"

"Nothing," replied Rosalie, with indignation at what she thought the trick he had put upon her.

"Nothing!" he replied, in amazement, "nothing! why, don't you see its perfections?" Rosalie, without answering him, walked away from it. "Nothing!" he continued, if possible in more amazement. "What! say nothing to this!" and following her with the stick in his hand, he pointed out a part between the knots that marked the year's growth  
where

where it had grown double; "and this you call *nothing!*" he exclaimed, in a voice that betrayed his indignation; "nothing! did you ever see any thing like it before?"

"Yes," coolly returned Rosalie.

"Where?" he asked, surprise taking the place of anger.

"In the wing of the chicken I had at dinner." With an expression of perfect contempt he turned from her; muttered, "chicken! devil!" as he returned his wonderful yew stick to the servant; and hearing a knock at the door, he left Rosalie (who retired to her room), and descended the staircase to receive his mother.

CHAPTER V.  
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“COUSIN John” had neither become much older, nor much wiser than when last introduced to our readers; but he had achieved what pleased him better—he was more *varmint*, and so excessively knowing, that, as he himself affirmed, those who could cheat him had only one more person to cheat. He had also made some progress in dandyism: could put on his neckcloth as well as though he had been apprenticed to the noted dandy of the day; strapped in his waist, and even consented, after much fuss, to allow his tailor to introduce into his coat the proper compliment of padding.

The science of jockeyship was not now to engross the whole of his attention: he
was

was not sure that he should return again to college; and he therefore set about doing what he could to secure the favour of the ladies. As he could talk with volubility and dance with ease, he did not anticipate much difficulty in his progress: assurance he had heard was a sure passport to their consideration; therefore, devil take him! if any one should rival him in impudence.

His reception in the world was such as might naturally be expected from his circumstances: he was considered rich, known to be handsome, and what was better, perhaps than all, in the eyes of the ladies, he was a baronet.

A hankering indeed after the splendour of title, seems to be one of the weaknesses inherent in the female breast; and I consider this glaring desire to be implanted by the special bounty of heaven, that those may be provided with mates, who have no other attraction to secure them.

them. I could perhaps bring forward many precedents which might be adduced to illustrate this proposition; but far be it from me, who have a soul to be saved, to deal to my book damnation.

To return—the baronet's title was equivalent to any gift under heaven; it secured to him the most flattering attention, garnished what otherwise might have been considered a weak understanding, and enabled him with impunity to *cut in*, and appropriate for the evening any angel he thought worth his while, from a less gifted rival. Thus coaxed and caressed, he was not long in setting a price upon himself; and after mature deliberation, he valued himself at the round sum of a hundred thousand guineas.

Ruth Pleydell was the only one he had yet met, who at all came up to his market. When young, her father had left her sixty thousand pounds, (so stated
that

that lounge for the diligent, Doctors, Commons). This in the course of years must have accumulated into something. The aunt she lived with was also expected to give her what she had; and as the estate which descended to him, encumbered with his mother's jointure, was merely sufficient to support him in the rank of a country gentleman, he thought it well worth his while to ensure the dissipation and pleasures of the metropolis, by taking to himself that wealth his rank and pretensions could not fail to secure him.

His mother, although she could not but confess Ruth to be rather too matured for him, yet did every thing she could towards aiding his endeavours; and thinking that *propinquity* promised the most likely road to success, she proposed making a visit to her son's seat in the country for the Easter week, and to get Ruth Pleydell to join the party. It

was so far distant, that the baronet consented to it with the greatest readiness. To be sure it might prove the finale of his freedom, for he doubted not he should have put things *en train* long before then; but there were three months to get over before the time came, therefore it was no very great sacrifice to *just* give his approbation to the proceeding.

The attack once begun upon Ruth Pleydell, he followed it up from principle; and though comparatively somewhat contemptible to many of her besiegers, yet he hoped diligence would attain him that elevated reward, which could alone indemnify him for his endeavours, and the mortifications to which they subjected him to receive at the hands of his rivals. Such service, indeed, as the one he had entered on, taken in its best light, had little in it to please him; it is true he thought the lady handsome, her manners fascinating, and her fortune un-
excep-

exceptionable; but there was a personal dignity at the same time about her, an independence that awed, while it tended to enhance the value of her slightest condescension; and she would condescend at times to appear pleased with his devotion. This gave him hope; and though, like a symptoles in geometry, he was always approaching, yet never coming nearer. he yet despaired not, but that by flattery and delusion, attention, insinuation lies, oaths, vows, and all the catalogue of the lover's artillery, to eventually gain his purpose.

The politician, the warrior, and the lover, are personally exposed to the scrutiny of the world. Their actions are the objects of every eye; and their success or defeat is placed in too conspicuous a light to elude observation. If they fail in their schemes, they are pointed at by the finger of derision. If they succeed, many are the envious wasps that rise up to sting them.

Sir John's *flirtation*, as these things are generally termed till the two victims consent to be tied together, soon became the town talk. Some hinted at "*last legs*," and would venture any bet he would get her. Others looked with scrutiny into the merits and demerits of the youth; shook their heads, and prophesied she would give him the "*go-by*."

Sir John was not free from this vacillation, between the dread of defeat and the hopes of conquest: driven to desperation one moment by danger, and excited to enthusiasm the next by a glimpse of success, he was often inclined to put an end to his pains, by what he called throwing up his cards, and leaving the game to be played by those who liked it.

Then again, the folly of neglecting the advantages of the present hour would rise up before him; the flatteries of hope again were listened to; readily he caught at her promises; and discouraged by no difficulties, diverted by no prophetic dreads,

dreads, he returned to the pursuit with renovated ardour, willing to believe that time would produce the moment favourable to exertion, when he had only to name the day, bespeak the carriage, crowd over his rivals, whistle away the honeymoon, and then back again to town to reap, in the land of dissipation, a proportionate reward to his labour.

But it is no sinecure to be playing the part of a *beau garçon* all day long; and sir John, instead of anticipating with pleasure the moments that in the way of business he was obliged to devote to Miss Pleydell, rather looked on them as a bore; and with the feelings of a boy, in regard to school, rejoiced when his duty was over.

To him who can write a copy of verses without marring a quire of paper in the attempt, and who can call upon all the gods and satyrs of the grove, with only the aid of his memory, love-making must be a vast pretty thing; but to our wor-

thy baronet it was up-hill work; and as a *delassement*, on his return from wooing he would turn into his cousin's room, much to the annoyance of Rosalie.

An author has said, "No man is a hero to his *valet de chambre*;" and he might have extended the observation to all those who shelter under the same roof with him. It is there no gloss can for ever rest upon him. You see him as he is—vanity sleeps; cunning and caution are fled; if he annoys, it is without point; and without premeditation if he pleases.

There was nothing either in Rosalie's person or manners to excite her cousin to undergo any restraint in her presence. He could pay no tribute of deference to a country-cut stuff gown, even though it had five tucks to enforce it; and her manners were such, that, as he declared to his mother, he should set down as uncouth in a housemaid.

Lady Delaware, although she had lost
all

all dread that he could possibly see her niece in a favourable point of view, yet was not sorry to have it established on his own oft-repeated disgusts and objections; replying to them all, by the *soi-disant* statement, that she had done all she could to improve her, but that she chose rather to go on in her own way; and concluded by trusting, with becoming fervour, in time and Providence to mend her.

Sir John, however, notwithstanding his oft-repeated exclamation of—what an animal it was! spent much of the time necessarily consumed at home in the little library with Rosalie.

Lady Delaware, at first, had often unexpectedly looked in upon them. She came in search of a book; to ask “John, dear” to mend her pen; or she wanted some writing paper; and when these reasons had been employed often enough, she would bring Rosalie some work to

do, that she wanted finished immediately. But these political exertions soon gave way, under the ocular demonstration that there was no necessity for them. She invariably found Rosalie occupied with a heap of books, that usually strewed the table before her; and sir John seemed there more from habit than inclination. It had always been his *sanctum sanctorum*; the drawers that skirted the bookshelves were full of his mechanical inventions; and she generally found him whistling over their contents; now trying to accelerate a carriage that was to go of itself, or lending his efforts to impel perpetual motion: and she left them with the conviction that there was no danger. "John, dear" was amused, and it was the best place for him; it relieved her rooms from the rubbish of his rattle-traps; and though he came, it is true, more times than enough to profit by the space they afforded for sounding his four-horse *tool*
to

to advantage, yet as he *levanted* (as he termed it) on the approach of visitors, she had little cause of complaint, and the colonel's lounge continued as usual.

"John, dear," however, and his cousin were not always so silent as lady Delaware generally found them; his whims and fancies militated much against Rosalie's self-assigned course of study; and though she found him useful sometimes in setting her right, where otherwise she would have remained in the dark, till enlightened by the perseverance of her researches, yet he oftener marred her endeavours, by interrupting her attention, when intent on her own advancement.

"What is all this nonsense for, Rosy?" he asked one morning, taking her books from the table one by one, and pitching them, with admiration at his skill, into a drawer that stood open, at such a distance that it did honour to his dexterity — "What is learning to do for *you*?" —

did you ever see the picture of ‘the pig turned schoolmaster?’ — damn that Entick! he is the first fellow I have given a floorer.”

Rosalie felt her temper ruffle, and she averted the eyes she knew were flashing fire; she was aware she had no chance with her opponent, and former defeats rendered her cautious of engaging in the contest that now annoyed her. She *had* seen the picture of “the pig turned schoolmaster,” and what was most provoking, with a little assistance of the imagination, it might be tortured into the resemblance to which her cousin had alluded. But she kept her feelings down; and, quietly taking the books from the drawer that had received them, and picking up Entick’s dictionary from the floor, again placed them upon the table.

Her cousin, however, excelled in *shying* too well to readily give up the amusement; and again one by one the books
were

were all deposited skilfully in the drawer; and again Rosalie had to replace them on the table.

Rosalie knew nothing of the knack of either appealing to a man's heart, his understanding, or his weakness; with her it all came under one head; she was *a lady*, and as such ought to be treated with attention; and when she failed in eliciting it from her cousin, she was at no loss to set him down as a "horrid fellow, who had no idea of good breeding."

Thus far they were on equal terms in each other's opinion; and it only remained in their contentions together, to establish which should be considered the superior. As yet, sir John had usually carried the day; for there was an innate modesty in Rosalie, that cramped the vigour of the intellect she felt she possessed over him; but as sir John became less strange, her scruples became weaker;

and establishing her principal defence in the "fundamental axiom, that a lady can do no wrong," she let loose her powers against him. But fired with ambition, she lost all by aiming at too much. Such as it was, wit, slang, logie, and languages, were employed against her; and, like the lamb with the lion in the fable, Rosalie was forced to yield implicit submission to the whims with which he tormented her, or suffer doubly through the means she might take to avert them.

One great bone of contention was, Rosalie's wish to become what he termed learned. What good was it to do? and the question was no sooner asked, than he would take measures for the time being of preventing it.

At first Rosalie met these obstacles to her perseverance, in what she hoped would eventually render her independent, with justification, recrimination, and a tornado of rage, followed up by
tears,

tears, that were to bend her cousin to allow her to continue her purpose. But the books were his; and in these petty skirmishes she gained little: it was good fun to see her in such a fury! and she soon found the monotony of submission far more likely to damp the genius her cousin possessed in the art of tormenting. On this new tack she was obliged to proceed with extreme circumspection; it was hard to play the *saint*, while possessing so much of the *devil*—to soften down the tone that would have electrified into one of subjection. With persevering patience (a science her aunt was the first to teach her the necessity of) she however hoped to succeed; cramped the sharp note that provokes retort, and set her adversary to sleep almost with the drowsiness of her assumed indifference.

Thus the book war had almost subsided; but, like a hydra-headed monster,
the

the active desire her cousin possessed to torment her assumed a thousand other shapes, that kept her persevering patience in excellent repair, from the benefit it had of practice. Among such infinite variety, it was difficult to say what turn of his temper the most perplexed her. Taken separately, they were all trifles; but it was this aggregate of *trifles* that became insupportable.

The pleasures of friendship which she might have enjoyed, were closed against her; the doubts and fears of love, which she had sometimes anticipated might be, were gone, alas! for ever. In vain did she take every precaution to prevent the possibility of his finding a subject for contest; they grew out of things where she had least expected them; stubborn evidence was always to be brought against her; and experience taught her at length, that, right or wrong, she had better be prepared for an engagement,
than

than to give him an advantage by slumbering on in a deceitful security.

Thus was a system of hostility set up between them : she did nothing to conciliate, and he let no opportunity pass where he could divert himself by trying the power he possessed of irritating her. The subtlety of her plan of softening her voice into a soporific charm, availed her little; sir John was not to be cheated: he saw it all—saw the power he possessed of tormenting; and the knowledge gave him that independence a cat derives from her tail; that is, he never was in want of a plaything.—“What a devil of a temper Miss Rosalie has!” he would say, after she had been, with that nice discrimination which knows so well where the galled jade will wince, plagued to the utmost. Solomon says—“oppression will make a wise man mad,” and it had robbed Rosalie of any sweetness of temper she might have possessed naturally.

naturally. Loaded with indignity, it swept away every little stock of fortitude and equanimity; and the victim of caprice gave way to ebullitions of anger, that, in her cooler moments, added much to their unhappiness and misery.

“Cousin John,” whose idea she had loved to dwell on, instead of even proving a friend, and that was the least she had expected of him, had turned out a tiresome enemy. Her situation, instead of receiving amelioration by his presence, had become less bearable than ever. Lady Delaware’s had been, comparatively speaking, passive tyranny, consisting not so much in what she did do, as in that which she did not do. Mrs. Breton had only made her work, when she would rather have been reading; but the present dynasty was intolerable! Sir John, a host within himself, made her feel that she stood alone, surrounded by oppressors, and like the poor toad when
tor-

tormented by the harrow, she was ready to exclaim—"Alas! here they are all masters!"

The only time she could now call her own, and in which she might add to her self-acquired store of literary knowledge, was when her cousin was either hunting over the town for amusement, or playing the part of *cavalière servante* to Ruth Pleydell. Not that she hoped to preserve the peace by avoiding the principal cause that excited his censure, and he had too often termed her a "sublime genius!" a "*femme servante*," and a "petticoat pedagogue," for his ridicule to receive much attention; but to reap benefit from books in his presence she found to be utterly impossible; frivolous questions, and irrelevant remarks, for ever impeded her progress; and if these failed to disturb the current of her thoughts, he would yet find a surer mode of perplexing; the button was twisted from the sleeve of his
shirt,

shirt, and Rosalie, as she put her books by to repair with her needle the fracture, sighed over the tax of being dependent.

But vain is it to follow the various modes and devices sir John Delaware, Bart. had recourse to to tease this dependent relation; they were of many and various casts of humour, all tending to the same point—the whimsical love of tormenting her. Sometimes she thought the passion seemed to seek for more than its own amusement, and that from a narrowness of mind he was provoking her on to abdicate his mother's protection; but in this she was mistaken; nothing perhaps would have annoyed him more than to have lost sight of her; it was the strength of his uncontrolled spirit, the natural love of dominion only, that gave him the taste for sporting with her feelings at the expence of his humanity. It has been observed, that in every man's cup, however bitter it may be,
there

there are still some cordial drops of felicity; Rosalie however could find none in hers; her days passed wretchedly, and she could catch no glance of sunshine in futurity — living on the charity of an aunt, who took no pains to conceal the dislike she bore her, and subject to the caprice of a being, who instead of acting up to the claims of consanguinity, made her feel all the penalties of standing alone in the world, hated and discountenanced as she was, without one tender friend, or hearty wellwisher.

This was the light that the simple age of eighteen threw upon the subject; unwilling to digest the evils of life, and neither doing any thing yet in her power to avert them, but rather sitting down and increasing their growth, by the showers of tears with which she watered them. She knew nothing of the regulation of spirit—knew not that there are those frames and temperaments of mind,
that

that will lead their possessors through a long life of trial, of many weary stages, and while brushing away many of the thorns, will crown themselves with honour and glory at the end of it.

Disappointment had attended all her hopes, mortification had blighted all her wishes. What was there then for her to do? Nothing! she thought, but in public be as perverse as possible; and in secret to sigh and wipe away the tear, caused by her unprecedented wretchedness.

We will not enter upon the merits of a different behaviour. Æsop has done what he could for the rising generations, in his admirable fable of "Hercules and the Waggoner." But, alas! to little purpose; it is read but as a pleasant story; and whatever their trials, whatever their tribulation, perhaps it is the last lesson that occurs to get them out of them.

CHAPTER VI.



LADY Delaware all this time was basking in the sunshine of self-satisfaction; and looking on the wheel of fortune as it turned round, with much applause and approbation. The colonel was still unremitting as ever in his attentions; and though her son had wondered more than once, "What the devil such a stick of a fellow wanted with them?" yet his frequent visits in Harley-street gave rise to no closer speculation on the subject; and her ladyship was delighted with the supposition, that sir John was too much taken up with his own amatory concerns to trouble hers by any untimely interference.

Ruth Pleydell and her son, indeed,
seemed

seemed treading very much in the same steps with herself and the colonel; perhaps through the force of example, for they passed much of their time together; Ruth generally making one of their party at home; and when they adjourned to the house of Ruth Pleydell, the colonel was sure to receive a similar invitation.

Lady Delaware felt grateful for this delicate attention in her daughter-in-law elect; and though much of the young lady's conduct was inexplicable, yet her ladyship had not time to find out any clue to its unravelling, but left it to fate, and her son's good looks, to bring her to a more decided mode of making known her intentions.

What these intentions were, no one could make out. Not only her own peculiar friends, but the whole fashionable world, were at fault. That one so flattered, sought, and sued, should put up with a "boy!"

a "boy!" a hobbotty-loy (as some expressed it), was astonishing. It is true he was a baronet, and the *bloody hand* has been known in many instances to blind the judgment; but to one who had turned a deaf ear to dukes, *strawberry leaves*, and all! it was folly to suppose that any desire of transmitting distinction to her posterity could have any sway in the conduct of Ruth Pleydell.

Yet while the world found no other intrinsic value in sir John but his title, he was not on such mediocre terms with himself; and though he allowed it, in his own words, to be "a very good closer," yet he would have been mortified to have supposed that title was his only letter to recommendation. Everything, indeed, tended to add fuel to his natural vanity. Ruth Pleydell listened to his volubility, and seemed pleased with his awkward attempts at flattery; admitted him at all hours of the day, and
installed

installed him in the honour of *attendant in chief* of the evening.

There must be something in him, he was sure, very well worthy this attention—something extraordinary to elicit it; but what it was he did not know. Perhaps it was his teeth; and he grinned, and talked in the glass to himself to see their effect; and then ransacked the town for cosmetics to increase their whiteness. Then he would think the charm lay in his hand, and he cut his nails immediately; in his hair, and it was dashed lightly with the curling fluid; or perhaps his eyes, and he brought them round to a look that was to do wonders.

It was most probably, however, the *whole contour*, he was at length compelled to admit, that on her heart had done the mischief, and he took more pains than ever to do her taste justice. With this, he became the very mirror of the fashion! and he had soon the honour

nour of taking an inch from the brim of the hat, and of establishing a "Delaware colour" in broad-cloth, as a reward for the pains he was at to attain his celebrity.

Thus were things *en train* for the *dé-nouement* to take place at Easter. Orders had been sent down to get the family mansion in readiness; Ruth Pleydell had fallen into the scheme; the colonel, "nothing loath," was also to be of the party, and lady Delaware in the success of her plans was completely happy.

Sir John knew not in what mind he was about the matter; he had, it is true, given his consent to the plan, some three months before; how they had gone he knew not. With three months between them, he thought he would have almost consented to have sold himself to the devil. This plan, in fact, was almost as bad. How he had been such a fool he could not think; but who would have

thought that *three months* would ever have gone by! If Jack Ladbroke was with him, the thing might be supportable. Why should he not? He wrote to honest Jack, and got his promise to join them in Berkshire.

Rosalie heard much about this intended trip, without being able to glean whether she was included in the arrangement; and though she had arrived at that blessed state of indifference that rendered her perfectly quiescent about the matter, yet she wondered that in some of her cousin John's discourses he had not thrown a light upon the subject, and have at least removed the uncertainty, which was the only thing that disturbed her. To go, she anticipated, would only be to exchange one prison-house for another—to stay, held out no object of attraction. It is true, she should once more gain quiet possession of the library; “But, oh! how silent and sad I shall be!”

be!" she exclaimed, and she looked for a moment with less displeasure on the tormenting interruptions of her cousin.

Since Ruth Pleydell's constant visits to the house, Rosalie had seen the baronet through a very different medium; and though when domiciliated in the library with herself, he was the same unlicked creature as ever, yet in the drawing-room, where he had acted as much as he could up to the lesson he had learned from books, he came more up to her idea of a Grandison or a Delville, than any one she yet had seen in London.

Her discrimination did not lead her to discover that he was there only playing the part, and when she has seen him assiduously stoop to pick up a dropped glove, gracefully place a chair, and attentively open and shut a door, she has sighed despondingly, and wished that she had such a lover.

Sir John rose some steps in her good graces after witnessing his powers; why could not she excite him to the same delicate devotion? The *why?* was soon answered; for she had now learned the difference between black stuffs, and silks and satins. But the knowledge gave nothing to her happiness; it disgusted her with her toilet, and she now added to her other deficiencies, that of being a slattern.

As her regard for sir John increased, her pleasure in Miss Pleydell's society sensibly diminished; she had before felt grateful for any little attention so fine a lady had shewn her; and as these were frequent and well bestowed, Miss Pleydell was making some inroads to her affections. Now things were changed; sir John in public turned out just the hero to her fancy, and Miss Pleydell assumed the character of a dangerous rival. Yet what mattered it what she thought?
who

who she liked, and who she disliked? it changed not one iota the arrangement of things. She was an atom—a mill-horse, who had nothing to do but to perform her daily round, and by perpetual simulation, shield herself as much as she could from wanton malignity and oppression.

There is a principle in the human mind that leads us to believe we have it in our power to make ourselves beloved, where we take an interest in exciting the obligation. But Rosalie had no such hope; her cousin evidently looked upon her as an intruder, as a butt for his wit, and as an object on which he could with impunity exhaust the whole catalogue of his testy humours, and unprovoked ill temper. At first, believing he knew no better, she had laid all blame to the score of his youthful ignorance and impertinence; and as such had received his contempt with feelings more excited to anger, than to sentimental regrets on

the occasion. Once seeing him with Ruth Pleydell totally changed her conception of things. She saw him just the being her most fertile imagination could paint; distinguished by his learning, the elegance of his form, the ease of his address; alike the favourite of the fair, the learned, and the gay; and her mind from the moment espoused a new set of ideas very detrimental to her former self-complacency.

All fault now came home to herself; and in vain did she seek refuge from her own insignificance in the amusements of study; it only served to point out yet more clearly the state of her deficiency; and racked by inferiority and ambition, her time was wasted in sighs of regret and tears of disappointment.

Sir John was not long in perceiving some alteration in his cousin's manners—a resignation to the worst, that she had in vain attempted at assuming. With nothing perhaps further from his
thoughts

thoughts than its amelioration, he set about discovering what new vapour had possessed her. It was natural his own annoyances should point him out a leading question; and he asked her, if she kicked as much as he did, about this business of Berkshire?

Although Rosalie, from habit, was generally at no loss to comprehend his meaning, yet the present question called for a clearer explanation, and the “eh, John?” pronounced in its usual broad way, after the following mode procured it—“I say, Rose, do you jib as confoundedly as I do, at this plan of running down to Berkshire?”

She now understood him; but he waited not for her answer, but continued with great virulence—“Such nonsense! such devilish nonsense! and then the old lady talks about ‘fashion!’ a fiddle-de-dee, I say, for fashion. Will fashion reconcile me to the trouble of being on the

qui vive all day? I shall not be able to do it, I give my mother warning. And then instead of walking over the turf, as she in her infinite wisdom prognosticates, I shall look like a hang-dog fool distanced! distanced! ay, you may stare, I'll lay you any thing you like, you'll see me at the end of the time *chassé-ed*."

"What's that?" asked Rosalie, who had never to her knowledge heard the term before — "what are you talking about, John? You may look angry, but I cannot help it if I do not understand you."

"It was no use talking to such an *ignoramus*!" he exclaimed ten times over—"no use in the world!" and his attention changed to the set of his coat, and the beauty of his China silk waistcoat. "Do you think I am *the thing*?" he asked, planting himself in a becoming attitude before the long pier-glass, and placing his hand at each side of his waist to make
its

its taper dimensions more conspicuous. "Why don't you drill yourself, Rose, after my fashion?" Rosalie tossed up her head and turned away from him. "Why don't you take in a reef, I say, in your tackle? Look at Miss Pleydell!" he seemed, as he examined Rosalie's unshaped figure, for the first time to be struck by the comparison. Rosalie bridled more than ever, as, bursting into a horse-laugh, he exclaimed—"Why, Miss Manners, by Jove! you are built like a Dutchman!"

The circumference of Rosalie's waist was not lessened by the indignant and wounded pride that swelled within her. Humiliated and heart-sick, she shrank from what would formerly only have appeared to her as idle raillery; but now it sunk deeper into her feelings. She had witnessed what her cousin *could* be, when properly excited. She thought of Miss Pleydell, and she looked down on

her own poor apparel, and on herself was visited all the sins of his delinquency.

Lady Delaware cast little thought to any one who did not in some way administer either to her convenience, splendour, gaiety, or pleasure; and as Rosalie rather militated, than added to any of these advantages, she was as little the occupant of her ladyship's thoughts as convenient. She had not lost one particle of the *horreur* of having such a creditless relative tacked on to her establishment; and though it was a mortifying event to dwell on, yet she resolved that the next quarter should see her contrive to part with the necessary sum, and Miss Rosalie settled in some "seminary for young ladies" in the neighbourhood.

But how many plans are circumvented by the accidents that "flesh is heir to!" Lady Delaware, in descending one night from her carriage, stepped on one side,
and

and sprained her ankle. For some weeks she was confined to her couch; and when she could walk, it was only with the assistance of a stick, or the arm of some attentive friend who chanced to be near her.

No one can calculate or fancy the numberless wants instigated by the human mind, but those whose infirmity of body has refused to lend its motion towards their achievement. It is true, lady Delaware had servants at her command; but there were hours when it was impossible to keep them in the room with her. A stick she rejected immediately; she was too much in the downhill of life to make it at all interesting, and she hated the very sight of it. Her friends to be sure were all attention; but when they were most obsequious, she had no desire for assistance; and when they were engaged, her policy would not let her torment them with her wants and importunities.

In this dilemma, Rosalie took the character of a "God-send!" she would be a sort of blind beggar's dog, that must do any thing at the bidding of its master; and though mortified to death by its necessity, she was by her ladyship immediately installed in her new office.

Let no one say, "Misery has done her worst for me—she can go no further!" Rosalie had been before, comparatively speaking, only a mouse in a trap; but now she was thrown under the very claws of the enemy, and she was not long in feeling the difference. To her there was no "*pat de velors*" to coax her to her duty; irritated with her own incapability, lady Delaware wreaked it all upon her niece in private, and in public Rosalie had equal trials to endure, through the medium of her own mortifications.

The clothes she had brought with her to town, still constituted the extent of her wardrobe. She could not now, as
formerly,

formerly, hide herself in a back room till the hour of dinner, and the moment the repast was ended, again shrink back to this refuge to her insignificance. She was now perforce drawn out into the garish eye of day; subject to the same light that shewed off the brilliancy of others, but which, alas! only drew forth to notice her wretched insufficiency. Possessing more perhaps than her sex's share of vanity, it was a bitter stroke this being presented to the public, with no adventitious claim to their regard or attention. She could not understand the feelings that had possessed her on first entering London. Then it was her most ardent desire to attain a post subject to observation; now solitude seemed the only solace that could mitigate her woes; and, to use her cousin's words, she kicked as confoundedly as he did, about this business of Berkshire.

CHAPTER VII.
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WESTCOMBE Hall was situated in the most desirable part of the county of Berkshire. Its neighbourhood was good, and for those who delighted in picturesque scenery, there was to be found in its locality ample scope for its indulgence.

The house was of that description, whose noble and important exterior, while it offered nothing to the eye of taste, yet promised much to the lovers of space, comfort, and grandeur. It appeared quite to have come up to the wishes of its every proprietor; no brick was newer than the rest; nothing had been added, nothing taken away; and its square walls and high sash windows,  
pro-

proclaimed themselves the same as when first entered upon by its primeval possessor.

It had, during the late sir John's life, been the scene of the family *séjour*, only four months out of the twelve; her ladyship preferring the gaieties a fashionable watering-place afforded, to the starch dinner-company and formal visits she was forced to endure in the country.

Since it had become the property of her son, she looked upon the Hall with less disgust and aversion. It was different now to formerly : the money it made away with, if not spent there, never would be hers; and she had therefore lost the drawback the reflection always caused her, that in a "darling watering-place," how much more delightfully she could appropriate it. Her son's guardians were liberal, and every penny now spent there, came (placed there in trust) out of their pockets. This altered the whole  
arrange-



arrangement of things; and her plan was to spend as much of her time there as she could manœuvre her son to consent to. She knew the surest road to success, was to do what she could towards making the first visit there agreeable; and the desire of establishing it on sure grounds, had made her keen upon securing the company of Ruth Pleydell. But how often it is, those things we build on most securely for our advantage, are the ones that sap the fruition of our undertakings! Were this fully believed, the desire of shaping out our own fate by our own exertions would become less violent, and perhaps, at the same time, the success we aim at more certain. To impulse however we must accredit the blame; it is that leads us into scrapes, which, when there, we have only to blame ourselves for, and then to exert our philosophy to make the best of them.

Notwithstanding the ardour of his professions,

fessions, perhaps Ruth Pleydell was the last person in the world whose presence could impart any felicity to the baronet. Too zealous of success to give up any portion of the studied conduct that held out hopes of ensuring it, she was a perpetual restraint upon his natural manners; and though he could not but acknowledge to himself that, if money would do it, he should be well paid for the exertion, yet he sighed over the projected loss of liberty, and while too keensighted not to perceive the disparity between them, he shrunk from the prospect that presented itself in the long life before them. Neither this distrust however in himself, nor the difficulties he had to encounter, for a moment served to turn him from his purpose. His behaviour was a tissue of inconsistency—striving after that, the acquisition of which he looked on with reluctance; and sacrificing his scruples to the avaricious principle

principle that instigated the exertion. Thus, one moment he was impelled on to the enterprise; the next pondering over the disadvantages that were attached to it; weary of the labour of concealing his failings, yet proud of the reputation and good fortune his counterfeited perfection had procured him.

No one however dreamt of the pros and cons that sometimes disturbed him: he was unremitting as ever in his *devoirs* to Ruth; seeming to rest his whole store of happiness on obtaining her smile, and appearing to dread nothing so much as her disapproval.

Even Rosalie, who perhaps saw more of her cousin in his unguarded moments than any body, never questioned the stability of his wishes; and as to her they seemed acted up to with vigour and firmness, she doubted not but eventually he would secure the object of his desires.

Vanity, it has been said, is a passion  
which

which crosses its own purposes, and begets contempt where it means to inspire admiration. But if ever vanity was admissible, it must be confessed it was in Ruth Pleydell. Possessing all the perfections of body which poets have sung, and apparently all the accomplishments of mind which moralists have recommended, she must have been more than mortal, not to have imbibed some portion of the flattery so plenteously lavished upon her.

Yet while possessing a person formed to inspire all the tenderness of love, her heart remained at rest; beating in unison to none who had yet sought to gain it; and whilst seducing the mind by the suavity of her demeanour, she yet impressed upon the conviction of her suitors, that she only looked upon their professions with indifference, and that while caprice and levity ruled her conduct, it fell not to the luck of any of  
their

their lots to win her. This conduct was tantalizing to many, more especially to those spendthrifts who meant to rebuild their fortunes on the acquisition of hers, and who misled by her easy and conciliating manners, had passed many nights in dreams of acquired happiness, and days in representations of how they should regulate their future felicity. She had, in fact, been spoilt by the world's unsought, unsolicited attention ; and it was reserved for one who little dreamt of his power, unconsciously to pique her into a desire of eliciting a return to the first spring of her affections—affections that had wakened into life almost unknown to herself—affections that she had believed herself unequal to, and which she almost hated herself for harbouring. Yet they had sprung up unlooked for, uncalled for, gaining no return ! and she who had been the very “synosure for wandering eyes,” bid fair to

to

to be herself a despairing lover. But what will not a woman venture to gain the object of her wishes! She who had only shone in crowds, now became the delight of the private circle; and she who had considered all time lost, not spent in either Bath, Brighton, or London, had readily consented to undergo the penalty of three weeks' seclusion in the country.

Rosalie, as has been before narrated, was become the epitome of a blind beggar's dog to her ladyship; and as the bodily pains of the sufferer communicated themselves to her mental sensibilities, her temper had rather increased in ascerbity towards Rosalie, at the time she looked to her for so many services and attentions. Wearied to death by the tediousness of her recovery, she only waited to be released from the constraint imposed by visitors, to give way to her nervous irritability. Nothing Rosalie  
did

did had the power of pleasing her; even her height was made the vehicle for complaint; and she never rested on her arm, but it elicited the remark, "how much she disliked to be supported by a gawkey!"

There was a quietness about Rosalie, that left it uncertain whether these irritating attacks were either attended to, or heeded. Complaint never escaped her lips. But it is not always complaint that marks the susceptibility of the sufferer. Rosalie felt it all—felt each mortification with added stings, that was inflicted in the presence of her cousin. Before Ruth Pleydell also, lady Delaware became less guarded; and it was then, if ever, the poor worm would shew symptoms of turning. But a convulsive contraction of the muscles, a suspension of the breath, never failed to set all to rights again; and once on her guard, nothing possessed the power of either exciting or rousing her.

We

We always aim at a period of enjoyment, and termination of trouble ; and it is this hope alone that supports the mind in the midst of oppression and uncertainty. The haven of Rosalie's desires was, to render herself adequate for the task, and then to take the place of governess to some " cherub of a child," in a nobleman's or gentleman's family. She had not read novels for nothing ; and the situation, if the interest were properly kept up, promised her, at least, the heir apparent as a reward for her labour. 'This it was that in every spare moment made her have recourse to her studies ; and as they gradually dawned upon her, and she became more sanguine of success, her intervals of pleasing expectation were conjured up more frequent. It was then her troubled heart would beat with less anguish ; and when her friends were most unkind, it was on this prop of promised independence that she fondly leaned for comfort.

Time,



Time, however, which is "the wise man's estate," was not at her disposal; and though she suffered no moment to lie waste by idleness, yet she found that the tax her aunt levied on her services interfered much with her progress. To read in her aunt's presence annoyed her ladyship as much as when, as she termed it, "Rosalie sat with her hands before her." Work was the only occupation that was allowed to proceed without a censure—a pursuit Rosalie always hated, and which now gained double dislike in her mind, from the ungracious manners of her who imposed it.

"What makes your needle sing so, Rosalie?" asked her cousin, one growing day, the end of April, when all seemed enjoying the first glimpse of summer but poor Rosalie, who was plying the needle faster than ever. "Damn it!" he continued, "it makes as much noise as the canary bird over the way! what, I say, makes it sing so?"

"My

“ My hands are so warm, that is all !” she replied rather tetchely, without ceasing a moment in her occupation.

Her cousin raised his eyes to the ceiling, expressive of the shock his delicacy had received ; and mimicking her tone, he continued—“ That is all ! I thought young ladies’ hands were never warm, Miss Rosalie : you never hear Miss Pleydell’s needle make that lively accompaniment to her exertions.”

“ Exertions !” replied Rosalie, repeating his words in her turn ; “ Miss Pleydell never exerts herself ; unless it is when you are present, to excite observation. Her work will never make her warm, or any body else either. She never works—for I cannot call the turning about a bit of satin-stitched muslin into all sorts of contortions, to shew off her hand, as coming at all under the designation.”

Sir John did not interrupt her, and  
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she continued—"Why she only, I am pretty sure, brings it out to shew her gold thimble; and then to tell the story, that my lord this-man gave it to her, and my lord that-man was jealous about her. Besides, look at her work-box! never tell me, that a person with their things all laid out in that apple-pie order, ever does any work that is of actual service to them!"

"Why, I must say," observed the baronet, "that her set-out is a very different one to yours!" eyeing as he spoke her untidy basket—"How should you like to have a work-box instead of this homely concern?" giving it a kick with his foot that upset it as he concluded.

"Oh! above all things!" exclaimed Rosalie, with mock heroics, as she stooped to readjust her basket; "oh! above all things!—to look at of a Sunday; but for nothing else. It would take more time to keep it ——" She paused a moment;  
then

then giving it a pronunciation peculiar to herself, she continued—"to keep it *comme il faut*, than my aunt would readily consent to spare from my labours."

A laugh of derision was made the most of by her cousin, before he asked—"How long have you known French, madam Rosalie? *Comme il faut*, indeed!—one would take you for a fine lady."

Rosalie instinctively cast her eyes over her dress. It certainly was any thing but that which might have induced her to take up the character—"Fine lady, indeed!" she exclaimed, re-adjusting her unbuttoned sleeve as she spoke, as though willing to use *her* endeavours towards making things better; "rather say a housemaid!—a scullion!" She brushed her hair from off her forehead as she concluded, and seeming roused to more than usual indignation at her disgraceful appearance, resumed her work, which she had lain down, with

more than twofold ardour. There was an elegance in the form of the hand that guided the needle, that could not be disguised by the homeliness of the covering that encircled it; neither was the expansive bust, and well set shoulders, to be defaced by the rusty black stuff that enshrouded them. It was all seen by her volatile cousin—all felt! even to the dark glossy hair, that alone bore testimony of the hand of taste, or that the graces presided in any degree at her toilet. Sir John sat and gazed upon her with a *nouvelle* sort of sensation: a haughtiness had gathered on her brow, which lent a dignity to her whole appearance, at the same time that the brilliant tint it excited on her cheek improved her complexion.

“You would wish to dress smarter, Rosy?” he asked; and there was a peculiar cadence in the tone never before called forth from her frolicsome relative. “You would wish to dress smarter?—a  
gown,

gown, for instance, like Miss Pleydell's? not such a dowdy concern as this is?—eh, Rosy?"

Rosalie raised her eyes and fixed them intently on him, as she replied—"Were I to begin to *wish*, John, I have things of dearer interest to exert them on, than Miss Pleydell's flippets and flappets, and all her vast catalogue of finery. But I have read in a book, that 'wishing is the hectic of a fool,' therefore I can tell you, you will not catch me *a-wishing*. My aunt will let me go in rags soon, and my toes out of my shoes, I reckon. But what is it? I believe, like tearing the skin from the poor eels, it is nothing when you are used to it."

There was a sigh quivered on her last words, and they were hurried that she might finish them and conceal it.

"Where are you going to?" her cousin asked, for she had risen, and was collecting her work together as though preparing

paring to leave the apartment. "Do not go, Rose. Ruth Pleydell is gone out shopping with my mother; and if you make yourself scarce, Rose, I shall have no one to speak to me."

She reseated herself, and as she stooped to replace her basket, sir John saw a tear drop upon it. It was the first thing that brought to his comprehension that the poor brow-beaten creature before him possessed her share of feeling. He could scarcely believe it! he had never seen her betray any other emotion than anger; and he sought to gain a view of her countenance, that he might be *quite* sure she was really weeping. Rosalie however had turned her back towards him; her head was scrupulously bent over her employment, and from the incessant singing of the needle, she appeared to be working faster than ever.

Sir John was most unaccountably checked in his propensity for teasing,  
and

and he sat for many moments silent beside her. The miraele struck Rosalie; but believing from it her cousin' was playing her some practical joke, she suddenly turned round, forgetful of her tears, saying at the same time—"Don't be so silly, John; I know you are doing something to plague me."

She found, however, sir John deep in rumination—rumination so intent, that it was a moment before he could recover his abstracted attention. When he did, her doleful visage was the first thing that occupied him. He looked at it, and the more he gazed the more it excited his wonder.

"What do you stare at so?" Rosalie at length pettishly asked, turning away, and again concealing her countenance from him; "you stare like a stuck pig, cousin John! I never did see any thing so tiresome."

A very little only was essential to turn



the current of the baronet's feelings against her: what they had been was scarcely known to himself; but they were momentary, and her last speech had entirely dispelled them. It had sunk her down to her usual low standard in his estimation; while it dispelled every romantic thought he had formed of her possessing any thing in the shape of excellence. Yet although the sentiment of admiration had been but a short-lived passion in the baronet's breast towards his cousin, yet unconsciously to himself it left better feelings in his heart, than any he had yet entertained towards her; and though the tormenting her constituted still a prime ingredient in his own felicity, yet he would now sometimes exert himself to controvert it, when put in practice by his mother.

At a time when her son was less taken up with Ruth Pleydell, this conduct might have given her ladyship some apprehen-

prehensions; but now she looked upon it merely as a passing fit of opposition; and detecting, as she thought, the source from whence it sprung, it annoyed her only as it interfered with the “eloquence that aims *to vex*,” and which was generally the sole object of her petulant corrections.

## CHAPTER VIII.



It has been observed, that “a vain man insensibly begins to love that of which he is proud;” but although Ruth Pleydell exactly satisfied the baronet’s taste, and he knew in this respect he was only feeling in concert with the public opinion, yet he saw the day approach that was to give them the honour of her society exclusively to themselves, without any great burst of felicity on the occasion.

His mother, who piqued herself on her management, had arranged that they were all to travel in her barouche together; dwelling on the virtues of her usual auxiliary, “propinquity,” (while she reserved a corner for the colonel,) as a never-failing charm of bringing people  
sooner

sooner than any thing else to their ultimate desideratum—matrimony.

Her son heard her plan in silence; and she was launching forth on its political advantages, when the baronet cramped her manœuvring genius in the bud, by quietly saying—"It is all very fine talking of the thing, mother; but like the poor prince H—— H——, I should be as sick as a dog before I had got to the end of two stages."

Lady Delaware was for a moment confounded; but soon recovering herself—"Sick!" she said, "John, dear! nonsense! you have never been sick since you were a child—a mere baby!"

Sir John gave a knowing shake of his head, as much as to say he was best capable of judging; which her ladyship mistaking the sense of, she again alluded to her plans with returning self-complacency—"Me and Ruth on one seat, John; you and Clayton on the other."

“Back to the horses! wheugh!” interrupted her son.

“But then anticipate your future success!” continued his mother, “sitting just opposite each other! and though the colonel may be very well in his way,” this was said with carelessness, “think of the advantage you will gain, should she fall upon making a comparison.”

“Advantage, indeed!” exclaimed sir John. “It is all damn castles in the air, mother. I’ll tell you what” — he grew impatient as he proceeded — “I’ll tell you what, mother, I cannot ride shut up in a box, and I wont! — and there’s an end of it.” Here relaxing a little in his petulance, he condescended to expostulate, and added — “I cannot. The fact is, I cannot, mother. A round-about — a swing at a fair — sea-sickness — all nothing to it! In twelve miles I should look like a poor devil going to an hospital!  
and

and then how stands the comparison with the colonel?"

He laughed heartily at the picture he in imagination drew of his probable situation; and then coolly observed to his mother, that she need not trouble herself in providing a birth for him, as he had long settled to drive himself down in his tilbury, and had even sent on a horse to help him on his journey.

"And if the day is fine, Ruth Pleydell is, no doubt, to be brought to consent to enjoy the open carriage with you!" His mother said this with a significant nod at her own sagacity; concluding with the old saying, "set a thief to catch a thief." But she rather slurred it over at the end, seeming sorry she had hit upon it; and added hastily—"That is, John, dear, I am surprised you see occasion to conceal any thing from your mother."

"What do I conceal?" he asked, a  
little

little disturbed at her ladyship's concluding observation.

"Why, that it is settled Ruth is to travel in the til. with you."

He stared at his mother—"And what's to become of my groom?"

"Groom, John!" her ladyship laughed reproachfully—"why," she continued in a persuasive tone, "I think he *must* give place to your bride-elect, Ruth Pleydell."

"I'll be hanged if he does," emphatically returned the baronet; and turning on his heel, and muttering between his teeth—"Bride—devil!" he left his mother to make the best of the frustration of her arrangement.

The carriages were before the door at the appointed time the next morning; that is, the dashing tilbury of the baronet, and her ladyship's family barouche with four post-horses.

The imperials were strapped on to the  
one,

one, and the box-coats neatly spread in the other, and they only waited for two very important personages, namely, the colonel and Ruth Pleydell. A chariot, however, was soon heard turning in at one end of the street, while the colonel on foot bustled round a corner of the other; and in the space of a very few moments, the little cavalcade began to move on its journey.

Nothing perhaps is so exhilarating to an English constitution, as the locomotion of travelling. The very postboys wear a mirthful face. Cares and perplexities are left behind, and all seems joy upon the occasion.

Rosalie, who was promoted to the seat inside her cousin had rejected, felt excited into something like happiness by the bustle and confusion. It was a sensible relief the having for that day no work to do; her heart was light, and though it all brought back to her memory



mory the day' she travelled in the stage-coach to London, yet by reading the milestones, and the names over the shop-doors in the different towns they passed through, she contrived to divert her mind from distressing itself by dwelling on the recollection too intently. As they however left London further behind, her occupation was less frequent; long tracts of road had now nothing to offer for her amusement, but a finger-post here and there, and the anxiously anticipated milestone; and quite giddy at length with glancing over the wheels, and watching the trees, which, to her disturbed vision, seemed dancing in the hedge-rows, she changed her position, and occupied herself by what was passing within the carriage.

Rosalie knew little of the passion of envy; yet she could not look on Ruth Pleydell, who sat before her, without feeling a pang of discontent at her own inferiority.

inferiority. Neither was this sentiment alone confined to the outward advantages the heiress possessed over her; \* no, it was her mind, her manner, above all things, which Rosalie admired, and which made her sigh over her own deficiency.

With apparently little regard for the opinion of the world, Ruth Pleydell never failed in securing its approbation. She united the qualifications of the woman of fashion, and the scholar; making however the latter only subservient to increase the brilliancy of the former; from the conviction that it is not easy to shine in the one, without relinquishing, or at any rate deteriorating from, the other. Amid however the playfulness of her humour, and the readiness of her wit, it peeped forth, gaining the applause of those, who, if it had appeared in unvarnished colours, would have set it down as pedantry, and have in that light condemned it. \* From having mixed so  
many

many years in society, where scarcely a word, a gesture of hers had been neglected, she had gained that careless security in herself, which, when once acquired, never is lost sight of. No timidity obscured the lustre of her talent; but if assumed to suit any favourite purpose, it was done with a confidence in her power, that never failed to obtain for her the very end she desired.

It is a true observation, that they who engage the passions in their favour, will find they have, in some measure, secured the obedience of reason; and never perhaps was it more strongly exemplified than in regard to Ruth Pleydell. She uniformly influenced the minds of her associates without their knowing it, or understanding exactly how she enthralled them; and counteracted their purposes, and detected their opinions, ere they were aware they had formed them.

Although Rosalie was perfectly *hors*  
*de*

*de combat* with the little party, yet the lively vein in which she found Ruth Pleydell indulging, could not fail of soon superseding the milestones in her attention. The lightness of her heart seemed to shine in her countenance; and as Rosalie gazed on the clear white, and the brilliant, and changeable tints of red, and listened to her vivacious and sensible remarks, she thought her more fascinating than ever, and more secure of becoming the wife of her cousin.

If it is a trite saying, that “no man ever repented holding his peace,” the colonel had little cause for repentance. For though many of Ruth Pleydell’s quaint remarks were addressed to him, they elicited no other return, than the ever ready bow, and the equally ready smile; and Rosalie could scarcely help smiling herself, at the pertinacity with which he applied them.

It is sometimes well to leave scope for  
the

the imagination; this might be the colonel's knack of pleasing, for that he did please was evident to Rosalie, from the pains his fair companions *vis-à-vis* took, not only to set themselves off, but to amuse him. In short, they all seemed determined to be happy; every thing was seen *en beau*, and the velocity of the horses was only equalled by the wheels, which were bringing them speedily to the end of their journey.

They had seen little of the baronet since they had parted in London; and lady Delaware could not forbear to express her surprise, that he should prefer "scurrying on by himself, to driving near them, and chatting through the window of the carriage." But Ruth thought that it was very natural; young men liked to try the speed of their horses; and as the colonel chimed into the opinion, observing, that the dust of one's own wheels was bad enough, without the addition of  
that

that of your neighbours; lady Delaware tacked round, and with a panegyric on "John, dear!" changed the conversation.

It was late in the evening when the carriage entered the lodge-gates of Westcombe Hall; and as they drove through its noble avenue of limes, lady Delaware glanced towards Ruth, to observe if the grandeur of all around occasioned in her mind any pleasurable emotions, from associating in her idea with the baronet. Nothing however was to be detected in her countenance; it wore the same smile that had illuminated it the whole of the journey; the same sprightliness was yet in force, and she was still, with a grace and lightness, touching on the most serious and most frivolous things, when they reached the portico, and the carriage drew up before it.

The baronet was on the steps to receive them; and as Ruth descended from  
the

the vehicle, he took her hand, and with a grace that was worthy even Chesterfield himself, welcomed her to the seat of his ancestors.

For the next day, although they had to cut it out for themselves, there was no visible want of amusement. There was the house to be viewed, the paintings to be criticised, the gardens and green-houses to be examined, and though last, not least in the baronet's conceit, the noble dogkennel, and the stables.

Lady Delaware, by the assistance of the colonel on one side, and Rosalie on the other, hobbled about with them as long as she was able; but though the "spirit was willing, the flesh was weak," and the pain in her ankle at length obliged her, as her son expressed it, to "give in," and to return with Rosalie to the drawing-room. It was a difficult thing ever to account for her ladyship's displeasure; but Rosalie thought, as she  
listened

listened to her present petulant remarks, that she was vexed the colonel had prolonged his stroll, instead of preferring her company, and the satisfaction of still lending her his assistance. The cause however mattered little, while the effect was so invariably felt the same by Rosalie; and she was anticipating the task of work, that would soon make her holiday at an end, when they were unexpectedly joined by the rest of the party. Lady Delaware's countenance brightened; Ruth Pleydell declared she was as lame as herself, from walking over the pitched stable court in thin silk shoes; and they adjourned to the billiard-room to take advantage of its amusement. Here they were broke in upon by the ringing of the half-hour dinner-bell; and as it came long before it was expected, they each secretly congratulated themselves on having so well got through the morning.

Music,



Music, riddles, and rebusses, very well filled up the evening. The colonel, to be sure, was not so quick in deciphering them as lady Delaware might have wished; and Rosalie more than once provoked her ladyship by bursting out in unsolicited replies when she thought she had guessed them. But as the pursuit gave the baronet an opportunity of making the gallant to Ruth Pleydell, by the pointed tenderness conveyed by his selection, it was time well bestowed, and promised not a little to assist the great concern they were engaged in. But one thing went *decidedly* wrong during the evening, and this was, an elegant little device of Ruth's, intended for the baronet, no doubt, by some unlucky chance got into the hands of the colonel. It began with the word "*comme*," then there were astericks, and the word "*j'aime*" brought it to a finish. Now, in the colonel's hands, all this went for nothing; nobody,

to

to be sure, exactly knew what it meant; but as lady Delaware whispered to her son, the last word would have been sufficient provocation with him, on which he might have established his proposal. She sighed with vexation as she saw the colonel turn and twist it about. He might have known that it was not for him! but then passing through his hands, it would have lost its point, even if he had given it to the baronet. To say the least of it, it was provoking—very provoking! and in the confusion of her ladyship's ideas, she turned to Rosalie, and said—"If she knew any charades, anagrams, or rebusses, she might propose them."

Rosalie looked rather shy at being thus unexpectedly called upon; which her cousin perceiving, it promised too great a chance of fun to be let go by, and he repeated the command of his mother.

"I do not know any," was in vain al-

leged. Even Ruth condescended to entreat; and her ladyship, with more authority in the tone than before, again repeated the application.

Rosalie however still declared her incapacity; she knew none but those she had heard when she was a child—"And those," she said, "were too foolish to please such old people."

"*Old people!*" was repeated with a burst of mirth by the colonel, her ladyship, and Ruth Pleydell. Perhaps lady Delaware's laugh was the most forced of the party; but Ruth declared they were only "children of a larger growth," and therefore begged their *age* might not deprive them of any of the share she should give to their amusement.

The baronet had evidently his laugh ready; and he could hardly restrain it, as he again urged her, in Ruth's words, to do what she could towards their amusement.

Thus

Thus beset, Rosalie found it easier to say a foolish thing, than by remaining silent do a wise one; and though no way sanguine of procuring them the object they desired, she nevertheless repeated the riddle that came the readiest to her recollection—"What is this?" she began, but here, for the purpose of getting her story quite correct, she hesitated.

"We cannot pretend to say," observed the baronet, "till Miss Rosalie does us the favour of repeating it."

She gave a "hem!" and again began—"What is this?"

'Humpty dumpty sat upon a wall,  
 Humpty dumpty had a great fall.  
 Not three-score men, nor three-score more,  
 Could put humpty dumpty together again as he was  
     before.'

She ceased, and the effect was simultaneous; every one laughed—it was a thing that could not be resisted; and though the baronet intended to have exerted himself that way at all events, yet he

could not have supposed any thing could so thoroughly have excited him.

Rosalie looked round her in some surprise; ~~she~~ saw the mirth was in no way affected, and with a better opinion of her *petit morceau* than before, she held herself in readiness to give them its solution. Every one knew what it was, but no one would pretend to guess it; even lady Delaware condescended to be jocose; and, with a glance at the *colone*<sup>l</sup>, she asked if it was Cupid?

Rosalie had enough to do, to say—“No,” to every one; every body guessed; but every body guessed wrong.

“Is it Hope?” at length asked the *colonel*.

“Nonsense!” said Ruth Bleydell, “Hope never breaks its bones. ‘Three-score men, and three-score more,’ indeed! half a word—nay half a look, will at any time bring ~~that~~ dear little creature to life again.”

She seemed for a moment lost in her own

own reflections; and apparently without knowing what she did, sat down and played so loud at the piano-forte, that she completely put an end to the charades and rebusses.

“Hope!” said lady Delaware, in a whisper to her son; “mark that, John! I’d almost advise you to strike the iron whilst it is hot, and make your proposals to-morrow morning.”

## CHAPTER IX.

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SIR John thought much of his mother's parting speech; and he owed a night of disturbed rest to the occasion. It was, however, impossible for him to bring his mind to quite her ladyship's way of thinking; and while he confessed that it was pretty evident Ruth Pleydell admired him, yet he knew at the same time there was yet much to bring about, before she would consent to have him. With this, he settled that he had better not mar all, by the impatience of his disclosure; nothing, it is true, could seem more disposed towards him than did Ruth at present; but to wait a week, at least, could not do much harm, if it did

no

no good; and he resolved at any rate another week should pass before he gave the subject any more of his attention.

This settled, his equanimity returned; and though he wondered, in no very gentle terms, what could bring them into the country while it was such damn cold weather, yet he accompanied his mother into the breakfast-room, with apparently his usual share of good humour.

If it is true the English disposition is dependent on the weather, this was a day to try the party at Westcombe Hall to the utmost. Not a glimpse of sun shone through the trees; and the cold easterly wind that howled about, imperceptibly tinctured the mind with melancholy.

Ruth was looking very grave when the baronet and his lady-mother entered; but in a moment it vanished, and she was as usual all vivacity and animation.

The colonel was examining a large
book

book at a separate table; and he even looked better pleased since this addition to their company.

"And where is Rose?" asked her ladyship, who had lately promoted her to the office of tea-maker; "ring the bell, John, dear, and let her be sent for."

"Here I am," Rosalie answered, walking out from one of the large window recesses

A cup Ruth Pleydell was holding to admire the pattern, at this moment fell out of her hand. The baronet smiled, as he said—"You look as distressed, Miss Pleydell, as though you had broken—you have changed colour again! You are ill? let my mother send for some doctor, or some aromatic essences."

In a moment however Ruth Pleydell was herself again; the fragments of the cup were removed; and though there was a visible constraint in her manner during the whole of the breakfast, yet she

she declared she never was freer from indisposition. They however all looked sceptical, which perceiving—"What!" she said, "not believe ~~me~~?" and catching up a coronella that ~~lay on~~ a table near her, she challenged Rosalie to enter the lists against her.

"I cannot play at *that*," said Rosalie, between the mouthfuls of her bread and butter, and laying a stress upon the last word, which though not understood, yet evidently denoted something.

"What *can* you play at then?" asked Ruth, approaching the table on which were deposited numberless *jeu-jeux*, for the purpose of making another selection—"Is it to be," she continued, "the devil on two sticks? bandalore? *trous-madame*?"

"I can play at *fox and goose*," interrupted Rosalie, "and that I think is the game best adapted for us."

"Oh, ~~bel~~!" suddenly exclaimed Miss

Pleydell, who had by some means snapped the cue of a bagatelle-board, "*oh, ciel!* I am as nervous as a cat this morning! Never ~~was~~ a more mischievous disorder ~~and~~ humming the words, "snap oaks like twigs across your knee," she in evident confusion walked towards the window.

To some this visible *égarement* might have given subject for wonder; but to lady Delaware it was all attributable to one cause—namely, *love!* and fixing the baronet's eye, she gave him a significant nod, that explained to him some good was to be done by following Ruth Pleydell to the window. Once there, her ladyship thought *she* had done her duty, and she was accepting the colonel's arm to convey her to the drawing-room, when a shout from her son deterred her.

"Jack Ladbrooke, by Jove!" rushing past her as he spoke, and in the hey-day of his joy, ~~giving~~ a pat on the

the

the back that electrified her ; and he was ready to receive his friend before he had half ascended the steps of the vestibule.

The phenomenon of seeing "honest Jack" on foot at that early hour, and as neat, as the baronet expressed it, as though he had just turned into Bond-street, was explained by his stating, that he and his brother were visiting at a friend's house in the neighbourhood ; and though they could not be prevailed upon to hear of his departure that day, yet he promised "sir Dit," faithfully, that he would join him at dinner on the morrow.

"And your brother?" asked the baronet "cannot we induce him to come among us?"

Mr. Ladbrooke smiled ; and it was soon understood that Valentine was paying his addresses to his host's daughter, Miss. Wrexham ; and that as the mamma and papa threw no obstacles in the way, and the lady was willing, Jack con-

cluded by saying, his brother had only his own consent to get, to make the matter certain.

"What is ~~the~~ lady like?" was asked by the ~~whole~~ party, Rosalie Manners excepted.

"Like!" repeated Mr. Ladbroke, "the gold mines of Peru! With the right hand she offers you the riches of Golconda, with the proviso that the *left one* is to be taken into ~~the~~ bargain."

"And what sort of a paw is it?" asked the baronet, with something like a *licking of the lips* that the nabob's daughter was still at liberty.

"A deuced ~~plain~~ one!" coolly returned Jack.

"What?" continued the baronet, "is it black?"

"Oh Lord, no!" replied the brother-in-law-elect, "she is ~~pale~~—as pale as the devil!"

"Then what induces ~~Mr. V.~~ to play the

the suitor?" asked sir John, who perhaps was the most competent person to have answered the question. But he was sporting the disinterested; for though in a corner, it was probable that Ruth Pleydell might be listening. "What does he marry her for?—a parson with a snug living! You do not mean to say he does it for money?"

"I do not, indeed," said honest Jack, with an expressive shrug; "I do not, indeed! Far be it from me to settle the motives of my brothers. Lord! they are two such zig-zag fellows, I should have little else to do, were I to begin to cut and contrive for them! Why, there is the 'squire, who is now with the old folks down at the castle, has managed so far to forget his bashfulness, as to fall in love with a girl he calls 'Mirry!' Mirry is the short for Maria, is not it? Maria Manners, the daughter of the clerk, sexton, beadle, bellringer, or some such thing—

thing—poor as a church mouse! yet the chances are, I take it, ten to one he marries her.”

The baronet loved sport much too well to interrupt it, and he said nothing till his friend had concluded; then with mock gravity, seeing from Rosalie's changing countenance that she had heard all, took her up to “honest Jack,” and explained, that as a connexion with the families was so near being formed, it was right, he should know her sister, “Miss Manners—Mr. Ladbroke.”

“Honest Jack,” though confused at first, yet very soon recovered; and fancying he read in Rosalie's speaking eyes the question she longed to ask him, he said—“As I have said so much, I think I had better say all. It is not a great deal; but here it is *ipse facto*. The 'squire (as we call him, from being the heir apparent to his father's wealth), about a month since, stepped his way into
the

the country—Fate, I suppose, directing him. When there, a pretty wood nymph crossed his path; Cupid at hand to aim the blow; and though ~~no~~ words have passed between them, yet ~~love~~ on the gentleman's side is all omnipotent; and, your sister willing, no doubt Hymen will soon publish the bans of matrimony."

Rosalie did not perfectly understand his story; but she gleaned enough from it to hope that her sister really was about to be married; and saying she should go and write to her directly, she prepared to leave the apartment.

"I have done a pretty job!" said the narrator, turning, on her leaving him, to the baronet—"Why did you not give me a hint, sir Dit? She's gone off to write the whole account to her sister. I would rather have given a hundred pounds than the thing had happened!"

"She shall ~~not write~~, if you object to the thing being ~~spoken of~~," said the baronet,

ronet, with the confidence of one possessing authority; "she shall not write:" he ran some steps after her—"Rosalie," he said, "come back—what are you going to do?"

"To write to my sister."

"Nonsense! Come back. My mother, I see, is about to walk in the garden."

Rosalie stood at the door irresolute; lady Delaware she saw was engaged with the colonel and Ruth; and reassured by the conviction that she could not be in any way desired, she again prepared to leave the room, saying—"No, John, you are mistaken—indeed I am not wanted—I shall have time to write a few words, depend on it."

Here sir John whispered something in her ear. For a moment she looked disappointed; but the next she walked composedly to her seat, and continued the occupation of her needle-work as though nothing had happened.

"She

"She has been well broke," said Mr. Ladbrooke, who had attentively watched the whole of the proceeding, "to be kept in, I see, merely with the snaffle. How did you tame her?"

"*Tame* her!" repeated the baronet, "the sex are never to be tamed—she is a perfect devil in petticoats!"

"Cousin John" had forbidden Rosalie to write home to her family; but her anxieties were in a day or two removed, by a letter following her from town from her sister; part of which ran as follows:

"I do not think mamma's health has ever been so well as it was before you left us; and as the time draws nearer and nearer, her regrets at leaving the parsonage become stronger. Beside all this, she used to fret a good deal at the thought of what would become of me, should anything happen to her.

Your

Your being provided for was a great comfort; but what was to become of me?—poor Mirry was to starve—to be on the wide world ~~alone~~; in short, there was no end to ~~the~~ anxious fears that perplexed her. She was crying about it one morning, when a carriage stopped at the gate, and Mrs. Ladbroke got out of it; and she had not been in the parlour long, before she said she was come to say, she wanted something—I forget what ~~she~~ called it—but it was not a servant quite—the thing however was, she wanted me to live with her. Mamma jumped for joy! that is, ~~she~~ did not jump, for she was not strong enough, but she was very glad; and she took hold of Mrs. Ladbroke's hand, and said something that made me cry; and so it would you, if I was to tell you. But I do not think she will die so soon as she ~~believes~~ she shall. But she says, she shall ~~not die~~ now, so much, how soon she ~~leaves us~~, as we shall be

so well taken care of. It makes me very sad when she talks about it. What shall we do when we lose her? Oh, Rosy! all my troubles will then ~~be~~ to come; for I think Mrs. Ladbroke looks a very cross old woman."

Thus ended one letter; which, from the date, had been written many months; the other, which bore the date only of a week past, after some gratifying accounts of her mother's health, proceeded as follows :

"For some time past, a strange man has done nothing else but walk and ride by the parsonage. At first we could not make out ~~who~~ he was, or what he wanted; though my fears misgave me once or twice ~~that~~ it was Valentine come to turn us out. ~~but~~ I said nothing about it.

it. At length it struck mamma, that it was one of the Ladbrokees; and so it was; but not Val; for Jenny heard him afterwards call ~~old~~ Mr. Ladbrokee 'father;' and Mr. Ladbrokee called him 'Jerry.' He is just like the picture of Rinaldo in the sixpenny book you bought of the old woman—though not dressed so fine. He always looks at us very hard for a moment, and then gets out of the way as soon as possible. He never speaks; and mamma says, from this, she could almost believe we were all mistaken, and that it is not one of the Ladbrokees. But Jenny is positive: ~~she~~ declares she heard him say, 'papa,' or 'father,' or something which makes it nearly certain. I sometimes think it is Valentine, though he does not turn us out of the parsonage; and if I was certain, I should ask him how he did, next time I saw him. But Valentine must have grown a great deal, if it is him; for I remember he was not

so tall as me, and this man is ten times taller."

This letter was a sort of *diary*. It gave the events of every day; and Rosalie read on fast from one to the other, hoping that the next account would corroborate the statement of young Ladbrooke, and relate, how "the young man had fallen at her feet, and offered his hand, heart, and fortune." But there was nothing of the kind; Maria seemed to know as little of him at the conclusion of her letter, as she had at the beginning; and what was worse than *all*, there was no anxiety expressed to become better acquainted. Rosalie found that she had nursed hopes, that her sister's packet had completely frustrated. She now saw that Mr. Ladbrooke had been talking at random; and she mentally threatened to make him understand in some way, how foolish she thought it of him to raise ex-
pec-

pectations, that he must have known had no foundation.

The circumstance deprived him from gaining a place in her good graces. But, as usual, her sentiments were kept to herself; and indeed had it been otherwise, no one would have troubled themselves about the matter.

Mr. Ladbroke was a superlative acquisition to the party at the Hall—a host within himself! he sung with Miss Pleydell; kept up a sort of *demi-flirtation* with her ladyship; rode with the baronet; played at billiards with the colonel; and even condescended, without any encouragement, to thread needles for Rosalie.

Yet notwithstanding all this versatility of talent, notwithstanding every one seemed inclined to be pleased, there were moments when it required much manoeuvring on the part of her ladyship to keep the spirits of the party from stagnating.

The

The best mode to prevent this, seemed to have as many auxiliaries as possible; and with this, she encouraged all the attentions of her surrounding acquaintances. Dinner parties were given, and returned; balls were talked of; and the gentlemen persuaded to put themselves, and their horses, in training for a favourite match on a race-ground in the neighbourhood. But all this would not do; there were moments when, to the tenacious eye of her ladyship, she saw evidently they did not all pull together. It was idle to attribute the blame to any particular individual; each seemed doing their best towards increasing the general stock of amusement. But it would not do; and there was, in spite of all, a flatness in their mornings, that even the recapitulation of the last evening's amusements could not rectify.

In this dilemma, her ladyship's thoughts returned to her long projected *theatricals*.

theatricals. The learning of parts, and the rehearsals, promised to occupy much of that time that was now with difficulty disposed of; besides, taken in a political point of view, it offered much advantage; every play had its Romeos and Juliets, and a judicious selection might ratify the preference, that was now only guessed at between Ruth Pleydell and the baronet, by awarding them the parts that were best calculated to put them in mind of it.

While thus, however, settling the affairs of her son, she did not lose sight of her own. Every play had a subordinate pair of doves, whose billing and cooing might easily be undertaken, and with equal share of advantage, by herself and the colonel; and the first opportunity, after she had settled the affair in her own mind, she broached it to the rest of the party.

It was while they were still lounging
round

round the breakfast-table, in all the dullness of *nothing to do*, long after they had finished the repast, that lady Delaware commenced the subject, as though for the first time it had struck her, of the capability the room possessed of being transformed into a theatre.

"Those doors, with the draperies, were surely made for the purpose!" exclaimed Ruth Pleydell, in an ecstasy, and she was soon in a bewitching attitude between them; repeating, at the same time, some lines, with elegant modulation and fascinating gesture.

"My name is *Norval*," said the baronet, in a fine declamatory tone, following her example—"My name is *Norval*."

"So you told us before," said "honest Jack," laughing at his friend, who was forced to confess that he had got to the end of his tether.

"Confound it!" exclaimed the baronet, as some excuse for himself, "we want a

prompter. What is it to be, mother?" turning to her ladyship. "What is the bill of fare? Rule a Wife, and have a Wife?"

Lady Delaware frowned, and quickly added — "No, John, dear; nothing so old fashioned; we must have some elegant comedy, something of modern date."

"Love a-la-Mode, for instance," observed Ruth Pleydell. There was always so much quaintness in her expressions, that left it indefinite in the present instance whether she meant something, or nothing. The observation, however, caused a silence—an awkward pause, as though it had excited embarrassment in some of the party.

John Ladbroke was the first to break it—"Let it be Tancred and Sigismunda," giving it out in an audible tone; "the part of Tancred by a gentleman, his first appearance on any stage what-

ever." This was said with mock gravity; then, turning to Rosalie, he continued—
 "I'll tremble you through all the persuasive accents of the lover—

' Let me exhale my soul in softest transports,
 Since I again behold my Sigismunda."

"Excellent!" was repeated by all.

But Rosalie looked foolish, and muttering—"She wasn't going to be made gawee of," turned away.

"You have an excellent talent!" exclaimed lady Delaware.

Mr. Ladbroke bowed. Then changing the fire of his eye, and the flexibility of his countenance, into an expression of agitation and astonishment—"Shall it be Hamlet?" he asked; then repeating the line—"Angels and ministers of grace defend me!" by the direction of his eyes, instituting Rosalie the ghost, he so terrified her, that after interrupting him by begging him not to be so disagreeable,

she shrunk behind her cousin for protection.

"Hamlet, by all means," observed Ruth Pleydell, "and I'll be the beautiful Ophelia."

"I hate tragedy!" interrupted her ladyship, somewhat pettishly; and it was not without reason, for Ruth Pleydell, in the ardour of her part, had taken up a little china basket of flowers, and with a dangerous sweetness that militated against her ladyship's interests, was bestowing them, one by one, with their appropriate speeches, on the colonel—and—"I hate tragedy," again lady Delaware repeated, in a tone even a little sharper than before. But then to qualify it, continued—"It is, you know, so much easier to make people laugh, than it is to make them cry; and we must not forget to have some consideration for our audience."

The colonel was now at her side, and
her

her ladyship's good humour returned with him—"But this is doing nothing," she observed, "we cannot fill all the parts of any play ourselves; therefore, as we have other opinions to ~~add~~ and characters to suit, let us bring up the subject to-day at the Wrexhams."

This was agreed to; and the party turned their thoughts to some other mode of killing the morning.

CHAPTER X.

ALTHOUGH Rosalie's presence was a very essential consideration in the article of promoting lady Delaware's comfort when at home, yet her ladyship, in her visits abroad, managed very well to do without her; for though her ankle paid no respect to persons, and refused its support as scrupulously in the drawing-room as it did in another, yet there was a wide difference between the restless wishes of home, and the quiet consequence to be supported before strangers. But Rosalie troubled herself little to investigate the distinction; and though at one time it would have been her pride to have shared the gaiety of every party, yet she

now hailed with pleasure any circumstance that, by leaving her alone, restored to her for a time her former liberty; and a card of invitation was considered as a *jour de fête* in the distance.

It was then that the park, the lanes, and the fields, were run over with all the agility that remained to her of her youthful joyousness.—“Dear Kingslade!” she would exclaim, as some feature of the country recalled it to her recollection—then would follow the exclamation of—“Dear mamma!” and “dear, dear Mirry!” Tears were then sure to fill her eyes—she relaxed in her activity; and it generally ended by her returning to the house, heart-sick and rejected, to take advantage of her solitude that she might renew her studies.

It is an odd world we live in, and those perhaps who know it best, see most in it to puzzle them. Rosalie had little knowledge of it; and thought of it still less;

yet there were things that struck upon even her observation, and which she could not pass unnoticed. She saw contradictions she little expected—deceptions, manœuvres, and what was worse than all, she saw meannesses practised to escape detection.

Many of her high-wrought opinions of Ruth Pleydell had fallen to the ground. She had become, most undesignedly, the witness of inconsistencies, that at first surprised, and then disgusted her. She saw the labour it required to appear perfection, and to gain that airy and insubstantial incense—admiration. She allowed it was a measure of the highest degree, to obtain the blessing of a return of love from those who charmed you; she would do much to captivate her cousin; but even she, poor Rosalie Manners, could not stoop like Ruth Pleydell, to dissimulation.

Conceiving herself intitled to distrust

whom

where she had witnessed double-dealing, she was at times on the watch, while apparently pursuing her undeviating line of dull stupidity; and by the aid of a tolerable understanding, and a sagacious perception, she solved many things, that to have disclosed would have set the whole party in commotion.

Sometimes she thought herself scarcely justified in keeping from her cousin; but reflection shewed her the difficulties she should have to encounter to establish proof, of what keen sightedness and tact had principally disclosed to her.

"Miss Manners," said Ruth Pleydell, peeping out of her dressing-room door, as Rosalie passed through the gallery to the staircase—"Miss Manners," she again repeated, with some hesitation.

Rosalie stood to receive her commands. She held out her hand to her, as she continued — "Come in; I have something

I wish to say to you." The door shut, and Rosalie was all attention. "Miss Manners," again began Ruth Pleydell, addressing her; but there was so much trepidation in her voice, that when she had proceeded thus far, it utterly failed her.

There was a difference in the deportment of the two ladies, that might have struck upon the perception of an accurate observer. Ruth Pleydell's clear blue eye sought the ground, while Rosalie's soft dark orb proudly rested on her; it asked plainly what she wanted, but Ruth was not prepared to answer it; and apparently to strengthen her resolution, she walked from the door to the window.

There was in her every action a language perfectly intelligible to Rosalie. She saw her humiliation—saw all the workings of the inmost recesses of her heart; and scorn had seated itself on her brow, when Miss Pleydell again turned to address her.

The

The art of physiognomy was not unknown to Ruth; the eyes are the windows of the soul; and in Rosalie's she read a deprecating look, that depressed every hope of *ignorance* having befriended her.

The case was then desperate—her whole strength was requisite; and the expression of doubt and humiliation in a moment fled, giving place to one of anxiety, as taking a valuable jewel from a casket on the table, she placed it in the hands of Rosalie, saying briefly—“If it is a pleasure to you to confer happiness on a fellow-creature, take this—and be silent.”

But the palm that fervently clasped returned no corresponding pressure. The bribe for a moment *happily* was allowed to lie in it: it received one longing look from her, who had never had such a treasure in her hand before; but the next moment saw it proudly returned to the casket from whence it was taken.

Ruth Pleydell stared at her companion with some amazement, and not without reason, for never perhaps was creature more distinct, than Rosalie in the drawing-room, and the Rosalie she had to deal with in her *council*-chamber. There was a rigorous expression in her countenance that awed her; a splendour in her eye that scorched her; and Ruth Pleydell began to tremble for the cause that engaged her, when she said, with much indignation,—"Why am I had here, Miss Pleydell, to be treated like a child?—a *rogue*, rather, who is to be bribed—to be bought over to secrecy? Were a hundred such gifts offered, me I would not take them." Here she turned away from Ruth with aversion.

"It is a nicety of conscience that influences you," observed Ruth, with some asperity; "you wish to remain a free agent to act up to your duty—a duty that will secure you no friends, while it
gain

gains you *one* decided enemy." Ruth paused; then receiving no interruption from Rosalie, she continued—"It is out of my way to offer either palliation or extenuation for my conduct; such as its errors are, admitting them as *errors*, you are in their secret. Is there then *any* thing—any thing I can do?—*any* thing I can give, that will induce you to keep it? Remember——"

Rosalie interrupted her. "It is needless, Miss Pleydell," she said, "to waste your words, as your riches upon me. Your secret, however, is safe."

"How?" inquired her companion, with animation.

"Why, from the simple reason," replied Rosalie, "that if I told it, no one would believe me."

There was an archness blended in the sarcasm conveyed in the last expression, that seemed to reflect as much on her own insignificance, as it did on Ruth Pleydell's double-dealing.

Ruth

Ruth took her passive hand, and pressed it between her own; but she spoke not. Neither did another word upon the subject ever pass between them.

There was however a sensible difference in Ruth Pleydell's conduct towards Rosalie after this conversation; a kindness, that while she felt its advantage, yet left her unsatisfied as to the motives from whence it originated; and while looking on it in the light of a claim in securing further forbearance on her part, she rather depressed it, than sought to give it any encouragement.

On the whole, however, Rosalie's lot was mended. Her aunt, surrounded by too many interests to give way to irritability, was patient, if not kind to her; the needle, to be sure, never was allowed to lie idle; but she had so much to listen to while guiding its dull course, that it lost much of its heavy monotony.

The whole party indeed were in the best proof spirits; the Wrexhams had entered

entered into the idea of private theatricals with avidity ; and nothing remained, but to select the piece, and then to assort the characters. This promised, perhaps, the greatest difficulty in the matter. All, it is true, were ready to do their best ; but all had fixed their eye on the principal part, and it required some delicacy to point out, without disgusting them with the remaining characters, that it could only fall to one of them :

The baronet gave his mother more trouble than any of them. One moment he was sure he should act " devilish well ! " — the next, equally certain he should make " a dreadful bad hand of it ! " Now he was hardly qualified to snuff the candles — then nothing was being done hero of the piece would satisfy him. Thus did he go on, rejecting one character for another ; sometimes throwing up the whole ; but invariably coming round to the same point—a decided preference for

for the best part, and a firm conviction that he should "cut a devilish prime figure in it."

Lady Delaware desired not this vacillation—she had much on her hand to manage, to bring secret causes to produce public effect. She had to deny with grace, and to accord with urbanity; to curb ambition, and, when it suited her purpose, to excite vanity. It was indeed difficult, through all this, to acquit herself with satisfaction, and to secure to her friends those parts, the performance of which would turn to their advantage. It was a hydra-headed monster she had to deal with; new obstacles for ever springing up, where she thought she had extirpated them.

A thousand times she wished she had never entered upon the subject. Her son so contrary! Ruth Pleydell so provoking! while the colonel remained so perfectly quiescent, that she began to believe

lieve were Richard the Third or Tom Thumb assigned him, he would be equally indifferent to the one as to the other.

Many were the plays that were run over, but none decided on. Every one had an opinion to offer; every one a favourite part to perform; but with so many ends to bring about, it was not strange that nothing was brought to a conclusion.

Rosalie listened, and wondered at the demur that took place about it. She could not understand the deep interests that were concerned in it; and when she heard the play of the Stranger mentioned among those brought forward for inspection, she was surprised it should be without hesitation rejected.

But while Rosalie was sparing a wonder and a thought upon the affairs of others, she had yet a dearer concern of her own to dwell on. At a dinner party at the Hall, she had been introduced to
Valen-

Valentine Ladbroke — not introduced as ladies and gentlemen generally are, for that was a ceremony in regard to her generally dispensed with, but introduced by seeing him single her out with his eyes the moment he entered the drawing-room. And though Miss Wrexham received his arm to conduct her to the repast, yet he remained in the room till the last, as though he desired that Rosalie should pass him. But Rosalie blushed rosy red, as she still retained her situation. She saw him hesitate, and understood his motive; and she thought she heard a sigh escape from his lips, as rejecting the offer of his disengaged arm, she said—“Do not wait for me, Valentine Ladbroke, because I have had my dinner long ago.”

Miss Wrexham stared at the familiarity of the appellation she used in addressing him; but Rosalie knew from his manner that he immediately made
her

her acquainted with the history of their having, for a short time, been playmates in childhood.

A quick pulsation throbbed at Rosalie's heart, as the door shut upon them, and instead of ranging the park and the gardens, as had been her intention, she remained in the corner where they had left her, to examine and ruminate on the feelings that oppressed her. To explain them, was to confirm them; and she was not long in arranging, very much to her satisfaction, that in Valentine Ladbroke she had found a lover. It is true, she had no very substantial reasons on which to support her cause; but what heroine ever had? besides, she had settled it, her affections were to be fixed upon her cousin, therefore she need not be very keen upon the present inquiry. A little would satisfy her. Cloris and Florinda had always two strings to their bow; but what materials
the

the second string was composed of never troubled their enjoyment.

These reflections, which she had indulged in, created a complete revolution in her previous arrangements: the air in the garden was cold, and she retired to her room, to improve her toilet against the time she met Valentine Ladbrooke in the evening.

The deepest sigh perhaps she had ever drawn now burst from her bosom, as regarding herself in the glass she thought of the different appearance she bore to both Miss Wrexham and Ruth Pleydell.—“What advantage is it,” she asked, “that nature has made me so, if I am ever to disguise myself in clothes that would be rejected by a servant?”

The so, however, tended partly to reconcile her; it calmed down the spirit that seemed half inclined to do its best toward breaking her bonds asunder; and
putting

putting her countenance into an expression of good humour, she returned to the drawing-room to wait the reappearance of the company.

Her toilet had, however, taken up more time than she expected, and coffee was being handed round as she entered. The voice of folly and fashion was excited to its highest pitch of mirth, in some of the groups that had here and there settled themselves in corners among the couches and cushions; others were talking of domestic concerns of their own, with tedious garrulity, to those who would listen to them; here a little miss tinkled the keys of a pianoforte; there another examined a collection of caricature drawings, the eye ever and anon glancing towards the door, and dropping again with disappointment when only a servant entered.

Rosalie had now been too long initiated into the polite circles collected at home,

home, not to know that the ladies were anxiously awaiting the appearance of the gentlemen; and she felt a dignity come over her as she reflected, that she now had the same interest, and was, like them, impatiently looking out for them; but as the gentlemen at length followed each other into the room, no one would have believed that any emotion was excited: the keys of the instrument rattled louder than ever, and the drawings were looked over with increased avidity, while conversation seemed never to have flagged, to judge from the present warmth of discussion. A little time, however, generally arranges these things as they should be, and the baronet was soon by the side of Ruth, the colonel by her ladyship, and, to Rosalie's mortification, Valentine Ladbrooke threw himself down by the side of Miss Wrexham. The rest of the party vapoured about according to their fancy,

fancy, exerting their talents to the general advantage, and bestowing their attention *ad. lib.* on the community.

Rosalie Manners's intercourse with the world had let her see deeply into her own deficiencies: she felt the disadvantages to which attentions, by bringing her out, made her liable, and she scarcely regretted the careless indifference that had hitherto been shewn her, as it spared her the mortification of disclosing to persons of wit and science that she could not reply to their converse with equal facility. The increasing pains this knowledge made her bestow upon herself, returned her little interest, for though she read hard in every spare moment, yet the identical information she desired never came till she fancied she had made herself ridiculous by some previous betrayal of her ignorance; once known, however, it was never forgotten; and though her reading was sometimes superficial,

superficial, and always indiscriminate, yet it was laying up a better harvest than might have been expected from the odd mode that was taken to obtain it: but it was impossible to expect the fruits of information to appear before the seed had taken root; and Rosalie had often to fret over her own illiterateness, to condemn her aunt for not sending her to school, and to almost hate her cousin for denying her assistance from his store of knowledge, when she knew he could do so much towards adding to her improvement.

Her cousin had no desire to aid or abet her. He hated prodigies and monsters, as he called them, and to be caught with a book was a sure provocation to excite his ridicule and indignation.—“How long is it to be,” he would ask, “before you intend to burst upon us in the light of a genius, Miss Rosalie? all this study, I suppose, is to do wonders !

ders' get the F.R.S. tacked to your name, and paint your legs blue, and you will be no bad addition to the Academy." He looked for a moment serious, as he demanded—"What end, pray, ma'am, is it all to answer?"

"I hope to turn it to utility."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughing as long as he could; "ha, ha, ha" Then mimicking her—"turn it to utility! oh the conceit of your female proficient's! I shall be glad to see the list of your observations, inventions, and discoveries—your experimental researches after truth, deduced by just reasoning into established principles. Why, the Temple of Fame will not be large enough to hold you, Miss Rosalie! you will occupy 'one half at least of round eternity."

Rosalie was too annoyed to speak; his volubility overpowered her; but he had snatched her book from her, and she had no object on which to divert

her attention within her reach but a prayer-book. It was Sunday morning, and though she had gone through the service, she took it up again, as a means of shewing her unconcern, and thereby baffling his desire of tormenting.

The scarlet cover soon caught his eye; and muttering the word—"methodism," that book, in its turn, was snatched from her.

"Give it me, cousin John," she said; "you have no right to take *that* from me. It is my own book—a dear book, that teaches me to bear my misery."

This appeal calmed sir John into some consideration, and in a tone of unusual tenderness he said—"Poor Rosalie! damn it, do not talk of misery: poor Rosalie! do not talk so, dear Rosalie; I am afraid I make you angry." Then, recovering his usual manner, he concluded with the mortifying taunt—

"Ah,

"Ah, ah! her majesty the queen's in a passion!"

Rosalie wiped off the tear that hung on her lashes as she replied—"If you think I am angry, sir John, you are mistaken; a fly will torment, but it does not make one angry."

He smiled sceptically, and she repeated, with firmness—"I tell you I am not angry; indeed, your kindness and your unkindness has long ceased to affect me; and I feel no more anger at the ill usage and caprice you make me subject to, than I do towards the knife that cuts my dinner one day and my finger the next."

There was a look of satisfaction passed over his countenance as she concluded, and he said—"Then you do think me sharp, Rosy?"

She looked archly at him, and answered—"Rather say, I take you for an edge tool, better let alone than played with."

His eyes fell, and in doing so, again encountered the prayer-book that he still was retaining. It was a rare subject on which to vent his spite; and turning it about disrespectfully in his hand, he said—"You are a methodist, Rosalie, and I never saw any good come of them. They are a compound of superstition, deceit, prejudice, and folly! I should like to catch you sitting up like a puritan, with your prayer-book before you."

"If you had come an hour ago, you might have had the felicity."

"What was the collect?" he asked, with quickness, half doubting her affirmation: "I bet you a pound you read the service *parrot fashion*! Devil take me, if you can tell!"

Rosalie recollected a moment, and then much damped his glee by informing him.

"Do not trouble yourself," he observed, trying to be provoking, "any
Sunday

Sunday will do: come, the first Sunday after the Epiphany, at a venture."

Rosalie bit her finger, compressed her lip, did all she could to contain her anger, and he resumed—"Well, you good people, of course, give some help to your friends who are less religious: you have brought us in, I hope, during your morning's devotions; we all come under some head; where have you classed me?"

"Among the nobility."

He looked pleased—"And what have you asked?"

"For that," she replied, "of which you seem most in need; namely, 'grace, wisdom, and understanding.'"

Yet, notwithstanding all this *brusquerie*, Rosalie liked her cousin; and perhaps she was more vexed by his attentions to Ruth Pleydell than she was by Valentine's *devoirs* to Miss Wrexham.

And yet Valentine gave some excitation to her vanity. His eyes would be often discovered resting upon her; and though no conversation passed between them the first day of their meeting, yet she doubted not they should renew their juvenile acquaintance the first convenient occasion.

She tried to recollect incidents that might bring back to his memory the little time they had passed in childhood together, when possessing the full tide of happiness—a happiness she now sought after in vain, and when, without a care or misery, their young life glided on in one continual rapture. What a picture did this bring back to her of home—that home, she began to fear she had parted with for ever!

There is something so congenial to the human mind in the remembrance of times past, that Rosalie had sunk her head upon her hand, and had given herself

self up to the pleasing reminiscence, unconscious that she was in company. Her thoughts were retracing her childish steps; and though they were dwelling with enthusiasm on her past happiness, yet the knowledge that it was all gone, oppressed her with sadness and melancholy. What a vast contrast to her present situation! made to sit down to occupations she disliked; spending her best days in the capacity of *crutch* to her aunt; confined like a prisoner, and not with the privilege of free agency to be found in a cell, but actually tied to the key of her keeper!

This was the light in which her present situation appeared to her; the comparing it with home had done it no service—it had heightened the disgust and aversion with which she viewed it. She hated her aunt more than ever, while reflecting on the kindness of her mother; and though too well aware of the futility

lity of grief, yet tears became troublesome, and a deep sigh escaped her bosom.

“Will Miss Manners allow an old friend to renew his acquaintance?” said a soft voice, near her. Rosalie looked up, and her eyes fell on Valentine Ladbrooke.

She had been so long abstracted from the party, that she cast an inquiring glance round the room, to see what had allowed him to approach her, and what was the present arrangement of the company. They were all attracted towards a distant corner; and with some embarrassment at receiving his attention, Rosalie turned to reply to her companion, saying—“I am very glad to see you, Valentine; and so pleased, you cannot think, that you have not forgotten me!”

“And yet you are altered,” he said, gazing on her kindly; “your cheeks are
pale

pale, and your eyes red with weeping, Rosalie."

"Never mind," she replied, brushing them off, with the only hand she had at liberty; "I often cry; but when she comes to live with you, pray do not tell poor Mirry."

Valentine started, and released her hand—"What do you mean?" he asked, with quickness; and his eyes shone with additional radiancy, as he again repeated—"What do you mean? live with me! she surely does not know me?"

Rosalie interrupted him—"She knows this," she said, "that when mamma——" Here her voice failed her; but again she began—"She knows this, she is to live some day with your mother, Mrs. Ladbroke."

"And how does she like the idea?"

"Not at all—that is, very well."

"Ah, Maria!" he said, seeing the motive of her correction—then correcting

himself in his turn, he added, with a smile at his mistake—"Ah, Rosalie! we are neither of us clever in the art of concealment."

CHAPTER XI.
~~~~~

ALL this time the spirit of theatricals was kept up with vivacity. Like Digo-ry, every one when spoken to had an appropriate speech to answer from; no one troubled themselves to talk *improvisatore*; it was all ready prepared at the tip of their tongues, and given with the true sock-and-buskin delivery.

Yet, while revelling amid the pride of the best authors, they had not yet surmounted the principal difficulty; that is, no one play could be decided on. But with so many interests to coalesce, this was scarcely to be wondered at; the old stagers keeping staunch to having a will of their own, while the young ones were too volatile to continue long in any.

Thus was one play put off for another ; and, as John Ladbroke observed, to get one to *fit* the party, the only likely mode seemed to write one for the occasion.

“ It is those devilish Wrexhams have put us all out ! ” exclaimed the baronet, begging “ honest Jack’s ” pardon for the liberty he was taking with a *family connexion*. “ That vulgar old woman, and her monkey of a daughter. Sunburn her ! I wish we had never made them a party concerned in it. Now, whatever play we mention, if is, ‘ Oh, mercy ! just the thing ! that sweet pretty part will exactly suit me ! and ma’s such a capital actor ! ”

“ And ‘ ma ’ is as clever in her own conceit, ” observed young Ladbroke, “ as she is in the daughter’s. I do not know what master Val is about ; but I must say, money seems to me a bad substitute for the blessings we look for in a matrimonial connexion.”

Miss

Miss Wrexham seemed indeed the last person in the world calculated to make a man happy. A spoilt child from her birth, she had been flattered into a large share of conceit, without possessing one personal attraction. A diminutive form was classed under the head of a sylph-like figure; an ill shaped nose, was the *Roxalana nez retroussé*; and a sallow complexion, in the words of the poet, must be called "fair, not pale;" and as such be valued accordingly. Her manners were a compound of whimsicality and rudeness; while her voluble discourse rather tended to try the forbearance of her hearers, than to betray any thing in the shape of sense or erudition. To gain applause, seemed the sole end and aim of her being; a desire that waited not in silence till it had gained its purpose, but betrayed itself in anger and impatience, if for a moment balked of its wishes.

But

But Miss Wrexham possessed a charm that never failed to put her on good terms with herself—a loadstone sure to attract attention sufficient even to come up to her wishes. She was the nabob's only child—the creature on whom he meant to lavish the fruits of his toil and industry; the darling of his old age; and he delighted, in his fondness, to declare, that, “so that he is a gentleman, though not worth a doit, no one shall say, that Simon Wrexham ever thwarted his daughter's inclinations.”

This complaisance however had not yet been called into action; Miss Wrexham had been two years from school, without meeting with any object worthy of receiving her attention; and she began with discontent to think hers an unfortunate lot, when chance introduced her family to the Ledbrookes.

There was nothing in the circumstance to establish it out of the common run of ordinary

ordinary events; till, during an occasional visit to his father's house in town, she saw, for the first time, "the Parson," as he was usually termed at home.) The appellation, which she had often heard, gave her little to expect; but the moment she saw him, her heart surrendered to Valentine.

It was scarcely possible indeed to escape the witchery of his eye, the elegance of his form, the melody of his voice—all were fascinating! and readily brought the heiress's heart round to doat, as she expressed it, to *distraction*.

And yet there was at times, amid the playfulness of his humour, and his readiness of wit, a bitterness of sarcasm, that rendered him little qualified to play the lover; but Miss Wrexham attributed it all to the seclusion he had undergone to form the scholar; and every little courtesy he did shew, was valued more from the scarcity of its attainment.

His



His family soon discovered the hold he had gained on the rich Miss Wrexham's affections; and with surprise they saw, that the imparting to him their observations, served rather to constrain and perplex him, than that it gave him any agreeable sensations.

They saw, with apprehension, his system of politeness about to be changed—his observance even of the common ceremonies, slighted; and aware that its detection would level a deathblow to their hopes; they cut out for him some urgent occupation, and sent him on the instant to the country.

Anger, regret, love, and pride, struggled alternatively within the breast of Miss Wrexham. At first his absence occasioned surprise; but grief for his loss soon drowned every other consideration; and, in a moment of desperate affection, she sought Mrs. Ladbrooke, and made her a confidant.

This

This was an event that came up to the very height of the Ladbrookes' wishes; and a letter was immediately despatched to their son—a letter tempting him to accept the heiress, though they knew him to possess not one corresponding sentiment of affection—a letter, that to strengthen this advice, assured him his father would, and could, do nothing for him. It was, in fact, a production that pointed out in plain terms the following alternatives: that he must either enter upon orders immediately, and vegetate for life at the personage; or, by marrying Miss Wrexham, give up the *black coat* for any other colour that might better suit his inclinations. The rejection of both, was to make him a beggar; but they treated the idea of his declining an alliance with Miss Wrexham with ridicule; he could not so completely stand in his own light! and the letter closed with the avowed persuasion, that he  
would

would act up to his own interests, by following their wishes.

Without a hesitation, his answer declined forming the connexion. Rather would he bury himself alive a thousand times, than in an instance, where it so dearly concerned him, act in opposition to both his sentiments and wishes.

The parsonage, which he had hitherto looked on with nothing but disgust, seemed in comparison a haven comprising every blessing; and he concluded with observing, he waited at Kingslade to receive his father's commands, where he should tutor himself with a severe hand, to be ready to act up to his duty in the character of a Christian minister.

This was conclusive. It was delicately hinted to the young lady, that she had been too hasty in bestowing her affections; furniture was bespoken to be sent down to the parsonage; and an order to quit forwarded to Valentine from his father,

ther, the rector, to be given to the present incumbents.

"There is, I believe, nothing like solitude for bringing young minds to reason," observed doctor Ladbroke, as he handed a letter to his wife, which he had received from his son that morning.

Mrs. Ladbroke perused it with surprise; which, as she concluded, changed into laughter, saying—"Poor Valentine! Ha, ha, ha! burn the order indeed! ha, ha, ha! what, you have had enough even of the outside of the parsonage! Poor Charlotte Wrexham! taken in the light of a *pis aller* by such a rebel! It is well I have kept a little within bounds in my disclosures. Foolish boy!" she exclaimed, tearing up the letter, "what a deal of anxiety you might have spared us!"

Valentine Ladbroke was now looked on in the light of the accepted lover of Miss Wrexham; but a lover whose peculiarity of feeling made many slights tolerated,

ed, and ironical acts borne, that would by her or any one else have been construed into a want of reciprocal affection. She however was too used to have her will *law*, to expect contradiction. She thought of him, as she wished to find him; and she was content, after her chance of losing him, to be permitted at last to love him.

Thus Miss Wrexham had a point to gain, as well as many others, in the premeditated theatricals. She was aware that she sometimes failed, when she hoped to be the most enchanting; and she was ready to employ the talent of others towards entangling a heart, that every day in her eyes became more worth the winning.

Totally indifferent to what sort of love it was, so that she inspired it, the fascinations of the coquette, the hypocrisy of the flirt, were by turns had recourse to, to elicit that affection, which, when  
founded

founded on mutual esteem, forms so much our greatest blessing. But Miss Wrexham set the wrong way to work; at her most consummate arts seemed to fail powerless, where their dearest aim was intended. Sometimes she would coax poor Cupid to be kind, by striving at the sapiency of intellectual knowledge; not aware that the best-conditioned love is sometimes scared by the helmet of Minerva. Then she would be the timid girl, and endeavour to twine herself round his heart by the bashfulness of her demeanour. In one of her best fits, however, the remark that she was indulging a useless weakness, not a virtue, put to the rout all her delicate sensibility, and the *mauvaise honte* assumed for the time being; and she looked round for fresh means of securing a place in his estimation, by fresh means resorted to for the occasion.

The eye of Valentine, indeed, seemed  
to

to possess <sup>a</sup> a fascinating power over his fellow-creatures. He could raise the smile of pleasure, or the glow of pride. He wanted not riches to secure him distinction ; he had it within himself—standing conspicuous above all, and gaining dominion even over those, who had scarcely discrimination enough to appreciate his merits.

The baronet, as he himself expressed it, “scarcely knew what to make of him.” Sometimes he was the “insufferable bookworm!” the next “a damn fine fellow!”

“Honest Jack” was as little determined in what light to view him, as his friend; but he candidly acknowledged his vast superiority; wondering where the devil ~~he~~ <sup>he</sup> had got his knowledge! as he himself had received the same advantages. “And as for his elegance,” he would say, “ecod you would think he had been apprenticed to some first-rate dancing-master!”

But

But while thus possessing the perfection of every bounty that nature and art have to bestow, Valentine Ladbroke was visibly far from happy. Yet the gay were attracted by his wit; and his company was lost with regret, and sought after with avidity; and though his own heart would ache to death at times with its secret vexations, yet the magic of his tongue never failed to convey pleasure and gladness to that of his companions.

To Miss Wrexham alone, he would shew scorn, and inflict mortification. He appeared indeed to look upon her, as the evil star who had baffled and diverted him from his path of felicity; and it seemed, that to submit with patience to receive her attention, only heightened his sin of meanness and duplicity.

“Even thê malicious,” he seemed to say, “shall not accuse me of deceit. If frowns can abate this unlooked-for distinction



inction of preference in one unsought, unsued, they shall do it."

He even went so far as to scoff at her ignorance. But self-love was lost; and insulted vanity slept, under the pressu- of selfish affection.

Mrs. Wrexham, a low-br d city MISS, who, under the care of a rich uncle had net with her husband in that produc- ive mart India, however, saw into things much clearer than her daughter; and many were the "wonders" and "wonders, at vot Mr. Ladbroke could be think- ing of!"

"I am surprised, my dear," she would say, "how you can put up with him! This is vooing with a vengeance!"

Such however as it was, Miss Wrex- ham was forced to put up with it; and though she often declared to herself, when fevered to the utmost, that she hated as much as she loved him, yet as the two passions prompted both to the same

same end, there was little expectation that on her part she would consent to any thing like emancipation. "The die is cast," she would say, with a spiteful joy: "he has asked me to have him; and now he must make the best of me."

END OF VOL. II

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